

ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA
MANAGEMENT PLAN

MARCH 1, 2006

INTRODUCTION

As metro Atlanta's population continues to soar, its citizens need cherished places for recreation and for connecting with nature and history. The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area, a marvelous 40,000-acre collection of awe-inspiring natural wonders and historic treasures, is one such place. It can serve as the heart and lungs of this rapidly developing part of the country, especially DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties where the Heritage Area is located. A comprehensive Plan for a connected, well-managed Arabia Mountain Heritage Area will set the stage to create a popular destination for millions of people.

This Plan articulates a thoughtful framework with specific recommendations to connect and enhance the Heritage Area's rich offerings. The Plan is a result of extensive public input from citizens, governments and other stakeholders who are deeply committed to preserving and promoting the Heritage Area's special character. The Plan can serve as a model of public and private partnerships working together to implement "smart growth" policies that protect and connect the Heritage Area for future generations.

Though other National Heritage Areas around the country showcase places that are also rich in history, with mountains even higher or rivers even grander, there may be no other Heritage Area where so many stunning natural, cultural and historic legacies are concentrated so close together and so close to a major U.S. city.

Establishing a vision and road map for managing these diverse resources well is the purpose, and the challenge, of this Plan.

We invite you to become familiar with the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan and get involved in making it a reality.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PLAN

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan (the Plan) presents a comprehensive strategy for future management and protection of the Heritage Area's diverse historic sites, unusual natural habitats and cultural resources.

Developed with extensive public involvement, the Plan seeks to preserve the Heritage Area's assets, link key sites together and promote educational and tourism opportunities.

Its overarching vision is to protect, connect and educate through five specific means:

1. cultural preservation
2. natural conservation
3. interpretation and education
4. recreation
5. economic development

Five cultural Focus Areas have been identified.

Each Focus Area is introduced to visitors at a Gateway, or place of entry with significance for showcasing the themes highlighted in each Focus Area. A special building and/ or place will serve as the Welcome Facility at each Gateway.

In addition, five Themed Routes will connect the Gateways and reinforce the messages of every Focus Area by providing designated routes to travel by foot, bicycle, car, shuttle bus, canoe or on horse back.

FOCUS AREAS	GATEWAYS	WELCOME FACILITIES
<i>Culture and Community</i>	<i>Vaughters' Farm</i>	<i>Original home at Vaughters' Farm</i>
<i>Natural Systems</i>	<i>Panola Mountain State Park</i>	<i>Georgia State Park Education and Demonstration Center at Panola</i>
<i>Early Settlement</i>	<i>South River and Flat Rock Community</i>	<i>Lyon's Farm and homestead/ Flat Rock Cemetary</i>
<i>Granite Industry and Technology</i>	<i>City of Lithonia</i>	<i>Historic Lithonia Woman's Club building</i>
<i>Spiritual Landscape</i>	<i>Monastery of the Holy Spirit</i>	<i>Susong homestead at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit</i>

Five Themed Routes

Land of Rocks and Rivers

The backbone of the Route System and connecting all Gateways

Stone Cutters

featuring downtown Lithonia, historic quarries and cemeteries and former Arabia Mountain quarries

Early Settlers

featuring Native-American archeological sites, Klondike settlement, Lyon's Farm, Ragsdale home and Parker house and African-American communities such as Flat Rock

Ecosystem Excursion

featuring Arabia and Panola Mountains and other rock outcrops, South River and related tributaries

Spiritual Experience

featuring the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Arabia and Panola Mountains and historic churches and cemeteries

IMPLEMENTATION

To meet the Plan's goals, it is recommended that all stakeholders officially endorse the Plan and consider the following action steps as first priorities.

1. Create a new management entity, building on the success of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance
2. Create an identity system and marketing plan
3. Designate and mark the Gateways and venues
4. Create the Welcome Facilities
5. Designate and mark the Themed Routes

THE PARTNERS

The Plan is produced by the Arabia Alliance with the participation of its stakeholders working closely with its many partners including

DeKalb County
 DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department
 Rockdale County
 Rockdale County Parks and Recreation Department
 Henry County

State of Georgia
 Georgia Department of Natural Resources
 Georgia Department of Transportation
 City of Lithonia
 National Park Service - Rivers, Trails and
 Conservation Assistance Program
 Monastery of the Holy Spirit
 PATH Foundation
 The Conservation Fund
 The Nature Conservancy
 The Trust for Public Land
 DeKalb County Board of Education
 DeKalb County Visitors Bureau
 DeKalb County Historical Society
 Klondike Area Civic Association
 South Rockdale Civic Association
 Evans Mill / Salem Road Coalition
 Chaparell Neighborhood
 Mall at Stonecrest
 Flat Rock Archive
 Lithonia Woman's Club
 Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation
 Georgia Tech Research Corporation

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The Plan was recently honored with two statewide
 awards:

Outstanding Planning Project award for 2005 from
 the Georgia Planning Association presented to the
 Arabia Alliance

Honor Award for Planning and Analysis for 2005
 from the Georgia Chapter of the American Society of
 Landscape Architects

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SNAPSHOT OF ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA (2006)

Location: 20 miles east of downtown Atlanta in three counties -- DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry

Size: 64 square miles and 40,000 acres

Significant tracts:

Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve -	535 acres
Panola Mountain State Park -	1,026 acres
Vaughters' Farm -	140 acres
Monastery of the Holy Spirit -	2,000+acres

Walking and biking trails created by the PATH Foundation:

eight miles complete with 16 additional miles under construction and planned

Acres of protected greenspace and parkland: 4052 acres as of March 2006
(3500 acres projected for the future)

Population: approximately 912,100 in three counties as of 2004

DeKalb County:	675,725 which represents a 28% boom since 1990
Henry County:	159,506
Rockdale County:	76,821
City of Lithonia:	3,400

Number of special concern, rare, threatened and endangered plant species: approximately 43, with approximately 110 species of trees and plants in all

Number of mountains: 2

Arabia Mountain and Panola Mountain are excellent examples of granite outcrops or monadnocks. Panola is a National Natural Landmark.

Number of rivers: 2

South River and Yellow River

Number of lakes: several

including Arabia Lake, Alexander Lake, Harps Lake, Joels Lake and Davidson Lake

Significant cultural assets:

Flat Rock - one of the oldest African-American settlements in Georgia, surviving slavery, the Civil War and suburban development

Vaughters' Farm - the last remaining dairy farm landscape in a county that once had over 50 dairy farms

Lyon's Farm - the oldest continuously occupied building in the Heritage Area, built circa 1823

Infrastructure assets:

Nature Center at Arabia and Panola Mountains

Partially completed PATH trail system with parking

Newly improved, \$45 million exits and access road system on Interstate I-20 greatly increasing accessibility and visibility in the Heritage Area

Future environmental school campus in DeKalb County, eventually K-12

Mall at Stonecrest, hotels, and restaurants and other related services

SNAPSHOT OF ARABIA MOUNTAIN NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA (2011)

Location: 20 miles east of downtown Atlanta in three counties -- DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry

Size: Approximately 64 square miles and 40,537 acres

Significant tracts:

Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve -	2,000 acres
Panola Mountain State Park -	1,319 acres
Vaughters' Farm -	140 acres
Monastery of the Holy Spirit -	2,275+acres

Walking and biking trails created:

20 miles of completed, interconnected multi-use trails created by the PATH Foundation with 6 miles scheduled to come on-line in the next 2 years.

6.5 miles of soft trails at Panola Mountain State Park

10 miles approx. of soft trails at Davidson–Arabia Nature Preserve

Acres of protected greenspace and parkland: 5,000 acres approx.

Population in 2010:

DeKalb County:	691,893
Henry County:	203,922
Rockdale County:	85,215
City of Lithonia:	1,924

*source Atlanta Regional Commission / US Census

Number of special concern, rare, threatened and endangered plant species: approximately 43, with approximately 110 species of trees and plants in all

Number of mountains: 2

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Number of lakes: several

including Arabia Lake, Alexander Lake, Harps Lake, Joels Lake and Davidson Lake

Significant cultural assets:

Flat Rock - one of the oldest African-American settlements in Georgia, surviving slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction and suburban development

Vaughters' Farm - the last remaining dairy farm landscape in a county that once had over 50 dairy farms

Lyon's Farm - one of the oldest continuously occupied homesteads in the Heritage Area, built circa 1823

The Parker House - now part of Panola Mountain State Park, the oldest home in Rockdale County built circa 1822

Historic Klondike - placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 as an example of a rural Georgia crossroads community

Historic Lithonia - noted for its granite buildings and home to DeKalb's first library, The Lithonia Woman's Club, a National Register of Historic Places nomination is pending

Monastery of the Holy Spirit - an expansive conservation area, 40 Cistercian monks who live here have built a community grounded in conservation and contemplation since their arrival in 1944, the church and abbey, built of poured concrete, have been called "Georgia's Most Remarkable Concrete Building"

Infrastructure assets:

Nature Center facilities at Panola and Arabia Mountains

Expanded parking facilities at Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve

LEED silver certified Arabia Mountain High School opened in 2009, first graduating class in May 2011

Mall at Stonecrest offering shopping and lodging amenities

Visitor Center and Monasticism Museum opening at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, May 2011

Overnight camping accommodations soon available at Panola Mountain State Park

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CHAPTER 1:

PLAN OVERVIEW



Kathryn Kolb

Arabia Mountain, DeKalb County

Without adequate planning, it is certain that the Heritage Area's exceptional landscape will be changed forever. This Plan provides strategies to preserve precious resources and engage visitors in learning about the Heritage Area's cultural and historic treasures. It embodies the vision that will protect diverse assets, link key sites together, and communicate the region's irreplaceable heritage by educating and entertaining new audiences.

Large portions of the Heritage Area remain relatively intact ecologically. Open landscapes blend seamlessly with pine and oak forests and hillsides. In addition to Arabia and Panola, smaller granite outcroppings pepper the landscape. On these smaller granite outcroppings, rare ecosystems and a wide variety of microclimates offer one-of-a-kind habitats for plants and animals.

Urban growth from all directions is surrounding the Heritage Area at a rapid pace, bringing with it single-family subdivisions and widened roads to accommodate increased traffic, a regional shopping mall and numerous related developments. Impacts on the South River watershed are likewise escalating, making it urgent to protect and restore riparian systems and retain the benefits of these living filters for polluted runoff.

This Plan will help to protect natural features, creating sanctuaries that allow rare and delicate habitats to thrive and continue to fulfill their role within the ecosystem.

1.1 HERITAGE AREA LOCATION

- The 40,000-acre Heritage Area is located 20 miles southeast of downtown Atlanta. It spans DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties, including the City of Lithonia and smaller unincorporated communities of Flat Rock, Rock Chapel and Klondike. The Heritage Area also includes
 - Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve
 - Panola Mountain State Park
 - other local and State parkland
 - South River and its tributaries
 - Vaughters' Farm, Lyon and Parker homes and other historic homesteads
 - numerous historic cemeteries
 - sites of Civil War skirmishes
 - active and historic quarries
 - religious institutions including the Monastery of the Holy Spirit
 - numerous schools including the planned environmental high school at Arabia Mountain
 - numerous businesses and private residences

- Native American sites

The boundaries of the Heritage Area were established by the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study (February 2001), conducted for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance ('Arabia Alliance') a non-profit entity established to create and protect the Heritage Area. Later expanded, the Heritage Area now covers 64 square miles.

CHAPTER 2

HERITAGE AREA HISTORY



ECOS

Vaughters' Farm, DeKalb County

When visitors experience the striking landscapes of such large granite outcrops as Arabia and Panola Mountains, they quickly realize they are in a special place. Early settlement dates back at least 10,000 years, as evidenced by archeological findings of pottery shards in the Miners Creek area along the South River.

Human settlement patterns are intimately tied to the profusion of granite and nearby rivers. Archeological sites and historic structures still in existence help paint a picture of Native American, African-American and European cultures. The region has retained much of its historic integrity, delicate ecosystems and unusual habitats, making the Heritage Area even more remarkable in light of its close proximity to urban downtown Atlanta, just 20 miles away.

Irreplaceable assets include historic quarries and Civil War sites, historic cemeteries and magnificent granite outcroppings. Of cultural significance, the area around Lithonia, pivotal to the quarry industry, was the source of granite for structures throughout the eastern United States. Early African-American settlements offer a valuable window on a slice of history that is often under represented.

2.1 ADDITIONAL HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

Heritage Area Landscape

The Heritage Area is part of Georgia's Piedmont region, and its granite outcrops reflect underlying bedrock composed of granite and metamorphic rock. Though Arabia and Panola are called mountains, technically they are monadnocks - too large to be granite outcroppings or rocky hills, yet not large enough to be an actual mountain. Stone Mountain, located north of the Heritage Area, is another prominent nationally known monadnock.

The evolution of these granite monadnocks led to the formation of vernal pools, which are dips and concave pools of varying sizes that collect rainwater. Vernal pools provide habitats for a number of federally listed rare, threatened and endangered plant species that can only survive in these specific conditions. Many plants are endemic to the Heritage Area. The Nature Conservancy of Georgia rated the Arabia Mountain area as one of the top 20 examples of this type of ecosystem globally.

The type of granite found in the Heritage Area is unique to the Piedmont region, and launched a quarrying industry that employed generations of Scottish, Welch and other immigrants to the United States, as well as generations of African-Americans. Local quarries provided stone for famous buildings across the nation, such as West Point and Annapolis academies, and reportedly the foundation of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. and New York City's Brooklyn Bridge, as well as paving blocks for streets in cities throughout the country.

The City of Lithonia became the heart of the granite industry, named after the Lithonia Hills in Scotland. In Greek, Lithonia means "place of rock." Lithonia's distinctive granite architecture remains evident throughout the city and the surrounding area.

Donated by the Davidson family interests in 1992, the original 535-acre Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve is a haven for rare plant species that exist only on these granite outcrops including nearby Panola Mountain State Park, designated a National Natural Landmark. Panola Mountain is considered one of the finest rock outcrops in the eastern United States, and like Arabia is home to several rare plants as well as delicate mosses and lichens that can take almost 100 years to grow one inch.

In addition to Arabia and Panola Mountains, numerous rivers and streams provide marvelous recreational opportunities for residents and visitors, and crucial habitat for wildlife. Primary watersheds are the upper South River and middle Yellow River, which make up part of the upper Ocmulgee River Basin. The division between these two watersheds occurs along Stone Mountain-Lithonia Road and runs through the City of Lithonia. These waterways are also the site of significant cultural and historical landmarks. Development in these watersheds is escalating, making it increasingly important to protect and restore these riparian systems and the natural benefits they provide.

The South River is the third largest river in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The river flows from the City of Atlanta for 50 miles into Jackson Lake and is a primary source of surface water recharge, meaning it allows storm water to filter slowly into the underlying aquifer, an important benefit. Notable tributaries include Pole Bridge Creek and Stephenson Creek. The Yellow River is another significant waterway, and is linked to the history of Native American and European settlement. There are also numerous small lakes including Arabia Lake near Arabia Mountain and Alexander Lake next to Panola Mountain.

Heritage Area Archeological and Historic Resources

Several archeological sites and historic structures document the settlement of Native American, European and African-American cultures. Historic sites along the South and Yellow Rivers indicate that these cultures relied on the rivers for transportation. For example, soapstone artifacts found in an area along the South River, known today as Soapstone Ridge, show that the region supported soapstone quarrying and trading during the Archaic Period (8000 BC - 1000 BC). Also along the South River, Miners Creek contains an extensive area of artifacts from the more recent Middle Woodland Period (200 BC - 900 AD).



Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance

South River, Rockdale County

The Monastery of the Holy Spirit property in Rockdale County has yielded many impressive Native American artifacts, including arrowheads that date back as least 10,000 years. Native

American burial areas at Miners Creek and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit indicate that indigenous people chose to live along the South River for centuries, providing fascinating source material for archeologists to share with visitors.

Heritage Area Settlement

Pre-European History

Evidence suggests that humans first lived in this region about 10,000 years ago during the Paleoindian Period (13000 BC - 7900 BC), when early nomadic peoples traveled the waterways to gather, fish and hunt. The region was densely forested and presumably rich in wildlife. Throughout the Archaic Period (8000 BC - 1000 BC), indigenous people developed tools of increasing sophistication, along with agricultural techniques that allowed for a sedentary lifestyle.

During the Archaic Period, indigenous people settled in Soapstone Ridge along the South River, making it an early site of trade and commerce. Archeologists have identified more than 110 sites along Soapstone Ridge containing various artifacts. Soapstone was initially used to make cooking utensils, bowls, tools and ornaments, and was an important product for trade.

Soapstone was plentiful and easy to work, yet difficult to transport. When ceramic pottery developed along the Savannah River in South Georgia around 2500 BC, it gradually replaced the use of soapstone to make bowls. In the Heritage Area, we believe this transition prompted people to leave Soapstone Ridge for sites more conducive to agriculture.

During the Woodland (200 BC - 900 AD) and Mississippian Periods (900 AD - 1700 AD), villages were generally located on higher ground, overlooking waterways. Settlement sites from these periods have been located along the Yellow River near Lithonia. On the South River, Miners Creek Preserve contains evidence of settlement spanning 400 years during the "Panola Phase" of the Middle Woodland Period.

Our knowledge of Native American culture in the Heritage Area is limited to oral tradition, known artifacts and written observations by early European travelers and settlers. When early European settlers arrived, Native American culture in the region was divided between the Cherokee and Creek nations. Land that today comprises DeKalb, Henry and Rockdale counties was largely Creek territory, yet sparsely inhabited. This landscape was regarded as a buffer and hunting zone between the two cultures. Native American settlement remains evident today in the existence of footpaths, still visible, dating from the pre-European era, as well as archeological sites and soapstone quarries. Browns Mill and other roads are examples of trails being adopted as part of the contemporary roadway and rail system.

Early Settlement to the Civil War

Most documented European history for North Georgia dates to the late 18th century. European settlement had an extreme impact on Native American cultures, whose populations dropped

a large land tract to the State of Georgia that encompassed present-day DeKalb, Henry and Rockdale counties. Land lots were distributed by lottery to qualified settlers such as the Lyon family. Initially, early settlers followed Native American trails to travel through the region, yet the influx of settlers required construction of roads and rail.

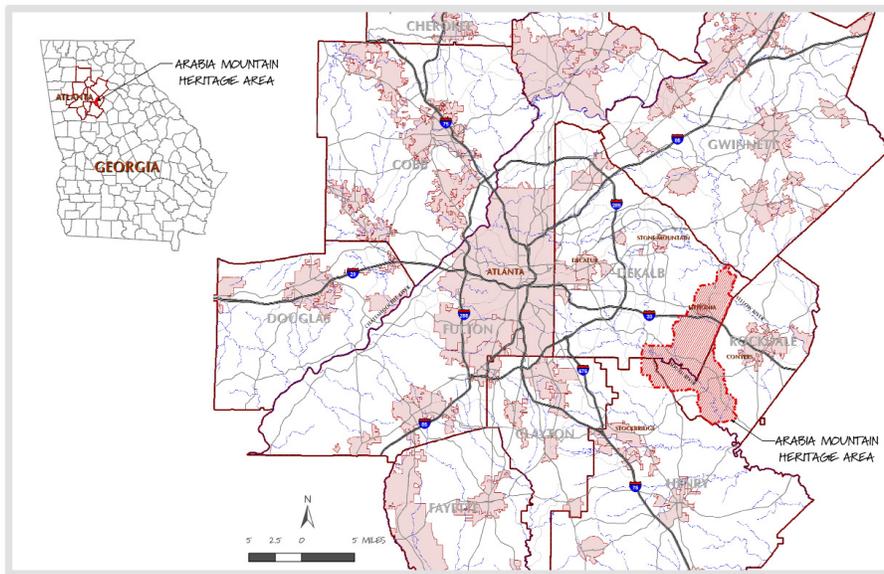
James Diamond, the first surveyor in DeKalb County, reportedly moved to Rock Chapel in 1820. Thus, Rock Chapel at Rock Mountain became the first European community in the Heritage Area. Another early community known as Cross Roads evolved at the junction of two major roads. In 1856, it was chartered and renamed Lithonia. In 1845, a rail line linked Marthasville (an early name for Atlanta) to Augusta on the Savannah River through the area that would be known as Lithonia.

African-American Experience

The Heritage Area is also rich in early African-American history. Former slaves remained in the vicinity and others were drawn there in search of farmland. The community of Flat Rock is one of the oldest African-American settlements in Georgia, dating back to 1820, and one of the oldest African-American cemeteries in the state still exists there. The grave of U.S. serviceman Lucious Sanders, who founded the Lithonia Civic League in the 1940s to promote voting rights, lies in the Lithonia African-American cemetery.

Agriculture and Mills

Not long ago, there were more than 50 dairy farms in DeKalb County, which was known as the dairy farm capital of Georgia. Today, Vaughters' Farm has been preserved as the last remaining dairy farm landscape, providing an excellent educational tool to share this lifestyle with future generations.



Heritage Area Context Map

dramatically from exposure to foreign diseases, and involvement in wars with the English, Spanish and French. Early Europeans initially settled north of the future site of Atlanta along the Chattahoochee River. Settlement increased tremendously in the Heritage Area after 1821 when Creek Indians ceded

Throughout the 19th century, the Heritage Area remained largely agricultural. Another fine example of agricultural living during this time is evident at the Lyon family home, spared by Sherman's troops, and the oldest continuously occupied structure in the Heritage Area, circa 1823. The Klondike community was named in the 1830s in hopes that gold would be found. Instead, farming became the staple business. As the Heritage Area was settled, many mills were built along creeks and rivers, using water power to grind grains and mill cotton. Though a complete mill structure does not exist today, the legacy lives on in names such as Browns Mill, Evans Mill and McDaniels Mill roads. By 1860, Georgia ranked fourth among the states in cotton production, though cotton production peaked in the South in the late 1800s. Cotton remained, however, the most important agricultural product until the end of the century, when granite quarrying on a large scale developed.

Granite's Role in the Heritage Area

The success of the granite quarrying industry had a lasting impact. From the 1880s to 1920s, the industry flourished from new technologies and increasing demand. The expanding railroad system facilitated industrial production and transportation of granite. The use of dynamite enabled efficient quarrying and allowed large slabs to be separated intact. Another development, the steam drill, was first used around 1883 to facilitate granite production. The most successful quarry district included Stone Mountain, Lithonia and Conyers, located in western Rockdale County. While other parts of Georgia also developed around the quarry industry, the Lithonia-Stone Mountain-Conyers district remained the most productive.

Lithonia granite was superior because it withstood weathering, was harder than other types and retained its color and pattern. Compared to Stone Mountain granite located farther north, Lithonia granite was easier to quarry and more readily split. According to the Cultural Resources Report for Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Lithonia granite is similar to granite found only in Russia and Norway. Lithonia granite was used

throughout the U.S. including at the West Point Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, state and federal offices in Atlanta, reportedly for the foundation of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., the Brooklyn Bridge and other structures throughout New York City. It was also widely used as "Belgian" paving blocks in streets across the nation. The peak use of this type of granite spanned the 1890s to the 1920s.

Quarries in the Heritage Area were known by names such as Big Ledge, Arabia Mountain, Pine Mountain and Rock Chapel. Many families began quarries around Lithonia, and large quarrying companies later acquired these smaller operations. Both the Davidson and Venable families were prominent in the quarrying business, operating quarries in Lithonia. The granite industry attracted skilled immigrants from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Scandinavia and Italy, as well as African-Americans who migrated to Lithonia after the Civil War.

The thriving granite industry helped Lithonia develop both economically and culturally. New streets and homes were built, and granite details and architecture became a distinctive feature of the downtown. One of Lithonia's most prominent buildings, originally known as The Seminary, is on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently under renovation. Other well-known granite structures include a Masonic lodge chartered in 1849 and the Lithonia Woman's Club building.

The Great Depression ended quarrying operations at Arabia Mountain and slowed production at Big Ledge and Pine Mountain, both Davidson family businesses. The family survived the Depression by inventing new uses for granite and expanding into other products. For example, in the 1920s, innovative methods were used to isolate minerals from granite, enabling portions to be used for applications ranging from pottery and glass production to agriculture. Granite aggregates were used as poultry grit, a food supplement to help chickens digest corn. Later, crushed stone from the Big Ledge quarry was used for road construction, while the Pine Mountain quarry became a source for finished stone.

The Heritage Area Today

After World War II, DeKalb County communities were strongly impacted by Atlanta's booming economy and urban growth, and Lithonia's granite industry made a comeback. While this period was productive socially and economically, a darker side of history was always present. Beginning in the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan had become active again in the Atlanta area, burning crosses on nearby Stone Mountain. However, Lithonia's African-American community flourished. Popular gathering spots such as the Lithonia Speedway and the Lithonia Country Club opened in the 1940s, and boasted musical acts such as B.B. King and James Brown. Lucious Sanders, an African-American activist and veteran, challenged racial discrimination by forming the Lithonia Civic League in the 1940s.

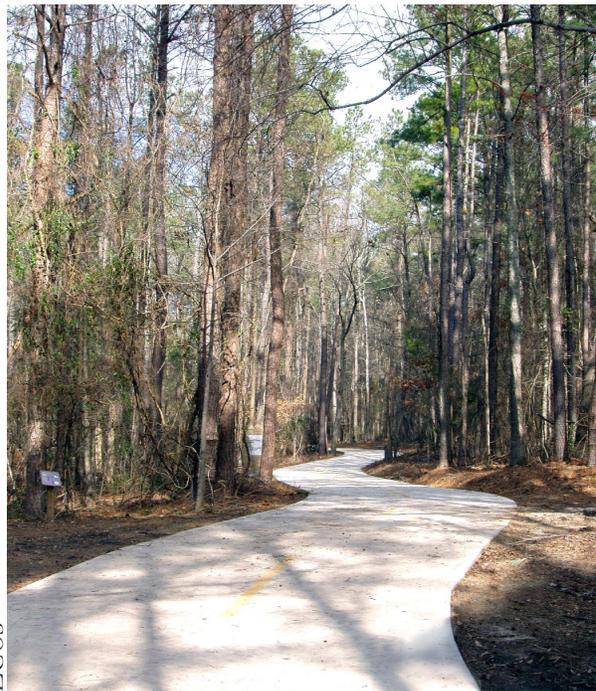
During this time, the character of the Heritage Area transformed from a largely rural landscape to one with a more suburban character. This change rose from the decline of the quarry industry and the influx of residential and commercial development. From 1970 to 1990, DeKalb County reported the third largest population increase in the United States. Before this population surge, DeKalb County created the Parks and Recreation Department in 1953 to provide recreational opportunities and manage open spaces. The State of Georgia purchased Stone Mountain in 1959, establishing Georgia's largest granite outcrop as a recreational park and tourist destination. Panola Mountain State Park was created by the State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources in 1969 and designated as a National Natural Landmark in 1980. Arabia Mountain was gifted to DeKalb County by the Davidson family, and designated as the Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve in 1992.

Today, the Heritage Area experiences increased pressures of residential and commercial growth. The Mall at Stonecrest, developed in the late 1990s, has brought an influx of new residents and retail services, and will remain a catalyst for future economic development in DeKalb and Rockdale counties. Multi-family housing, single-family subdivisions and retail establishments dot the

landscape surrounding the mall. This growth has brought added demands on infrastructure and services for existing residents. Communities are actively working with the counties to determine appropriate measures for retaining the Heritage Area's high quality of life through the Arabia Alliance's efforts including this Plan.

Recreational and educational improvements have enhanced the Heritage Area in the 21st century. At the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, PATH Foundation has completed eight miles of paved walking and bike trails throughout the Nature Preserve, creating a continuous linear park from the City of Lithonia to Arabia Mountain and on to Panola Mountain. These attractive trails wind through a variety of landscapes including Vaughters' Farm, forests, wetlands and granite outcrops. Planned additions to the trail system include connecting along the South River to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, the largest contiguous greenspace in Rockdale County.

In the near future, one of the most significant additions will be an environmental high school built by DeKalb County Public Schools. The actual



ECOS

Multi-use trail through Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

building, as well as the curriculum, will actively engage students in environmental studies with emphasis on natural systems found in the Heritage Area. The site is connected to the PATH trail system.

Another Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve innovation will be a future development to cluster a public library, police station and fire station together, directly along the PATH trail. Normally, these community amenities are separate. By locating them together in one place, all three become more accessible to the public. School groups can more easily enjoy tours of the fire station; young and old can walk or bike to the library; the trails will be used by police and fire fighters.

In 2004, Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE) opened on Klondike Road and has become a trusted source for protecting wildlife and their habitat. Through an active environmental education and animal rescue program, AWARE (www.awareone.org) has saved hundreds of birds and animals in the Heritage Area.

Three fulltime rangers are now employed at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve by the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, the relocated historic Ragsdale home will soon be restored, and expanded parking and trailhead facilities have recently been added to the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve.

Recognizing the importance of Panola Mountain State Park to the metropolitan Atlanta, the Georgia Parks and Historic Sites Division has created a new park master plan that will introduce outdoor recreation, environmental education and sustainable stewardship to millions of Georgia citizens and visitors. The Division is pursuing additional property acquisitions to buffer existing park property, protect the natural landscape, expand the opportunity for recreational developments and connect the park to Rockdale County properties downstream along the South River. The park master plan calls for reorienting the park entrance, creating expanded day-use and family activity areas,

developing overnight camping areas, expanding hiking and walking trails, wildlife viewing areas, river access points, and stabilizing and restoring the historic Parker Home. The master plan also includes the development of an environmentally sustainable outdoor recreation educational center which could house the Division's state headquarters offices. See Appendix G for the Panola Mountain State Park master plan.

Recent increases in the number of recreational amenities has laid the groundwork to create popular attractions for Atlanta-area residents and families seeking activities in nature, all in close proximity to where they live.

CHAPTER 3:

HERITAGE AREA PLANNING PROCESS



ECOS

Community members review analysis maps of the Heritage Area

PREFACE

Before delving into the technical details of the Management Plan and its recommendations, let's take a moment to visualize the end result. Look into the not-so-distant future to imagine the Heritage Area ready to welcome thousands of first-time visitors. A beautifully designed signage system with entertaining stories and graphics and inviting Gateways begin to reveal the mystery behind the history, and bring it to life.

IMAGINE yourself at a secluded monastery where generations of monks have devoted their lives to silent meditation, communing with the divine. Leave the traffic and skyscrapers behind as you stroll this 2,000-acre property, permanently protected from development. Now imagine Native Americans living on the same land 10,000 years ago. Perhaps they believed that everything in nature was divine.

IMAGINE walking through Vaughters' Farm along the PATH trail. Try to imagine the sweet scents of home-baked pies coming out of the oven in a house made of granite from a nearby quarry on Arabia Mountain. Walk over to the original barn, where you can rent a bicycle and ride the trail to Arabia. Explore the same route used by an old railroad that once hauled granite to cities around the U.S. Walk inside old quarry buildings, full of character, now abandoned and being reclaimed by nature.

If it's springtime, you'll marvel at the radiant, red diamorpha plants blooming in almost every vernal pool on Arabia Mountain. If it's fall, the mountain will be covered in bright yellow daisies in full bloom, both plants defying logic to flourish in such harsh, rocky conditions.

As you return to Vaughters' Farm Gateway, *IMAGINE* a herd of dairy cows in the open fields in front of you. If this type of grass, once food for cows, was replaced with a native grass, this same field could entice very different species to live here, such as indigo buntings, henslow's sparrows, blue birds and other migrating song birds.

IMAGINE the fields around the Ragsdale house being plowed with mules, very slowly, before tractors. Think about how much work it took to prepare the fields for crops, all planted by hand. *IMAGINE* what farm life was like for women. Every meal was made from scratch with food grown or raised right here on their own property. Every piece of clothing was sewn by hand for every member of the family.

IMAGINE 150 Irish, Welch and Scottish artisans sweating and hammering at the same time, chipping away at solid granite to loosen large slabs. Look closely, and you'll see the actual scars of quarrying still there. So are the holes drilled by hand. Volunteer guides are happy to show you an original hand drill to see how hard it is to break granite by the force of one's own strength, before dynamite and other power tools were invented.

Though the history of slavery has been widely told, those stories become real as you walk through Flat Rock Cemetery, reading faded words on a tombstone, hand carved from local granite almost 200 years ago. You can imagine how hard life was, before and after slavery, as you listen to the voices of their descendants, sharing personal memories on an audio tour downloaded to your portable CD player.

IMAGINE looking at faces in historic photographs, of people born as slaves and later freed. The pride and dignity in those faces comes shining through, as if they knew they were paving the way for future business and political leaders to rise to the top of their fields and continue to live in DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties today.

IMAGINE biking on the trail and coming upon a group of teenagers at DeKalb County's first environmental high school. They are using Arabia Lake as an outdoor laboratory to monitor water quality. It's one of many hands-on assignments in a newly developed curriculum with in-depth lessons for understanding rare natural habitats found throughout the Heritage Area.

IMAGINE a gentle mist whispering on the surface of Mountain Creek just after sunrise. It makes you stop and appreciate this random gift of beauty, never to be repeated just like this.

At Panola Mountain Nature Center, your children marvel at a taxidermy display of most of the mammals and reptiles that live nearby. All in one view, you can stand six inches from a real grey fox, the larger red fox with luxurious tail, a mink, a spotted bobcat and an opossum hanging upside down from a tree, by its wiry tail.

IMAGINE getting into a canoe at Panola Mountain, in a cleaner South River at a spectacular waterfall known as Panola Shoals. Your gentle ride may not be that different from the way Native American hunters traveled this same river thousands of years ago. You pass by the same granite rocks and curves in the river, arriving at the 60-year-old Monastery of the Holy Spirit at Honey Creek in the heart of the largest, continuous greenspace in Rockdale County, tended by generations of Trappist monks. After exploring fascinating exhibits on butterflies, Native American artifacts and the Japanese bonsai trees that these monks are famous for, catch a free ride back to your car on a clean-fuel Heritage Area shuttle.

IMAGINE standing on a weathered boardwalk in Panola State Park. It's an early winter morning; the sky is granite grey. There's a spectacular view of Stone Mountain straight ahead, looming large on the horizon. All the leaves are down, and you realize this vista hasn't changed in millions of years.

Can you even IMAGINE 475 million years? That's how long Arabia Mountain has been here, frozen in time. Is it possible that this granite mound has a soul or holds secrets? Its primordial boulders are remnants of an ancient mountain, stripped over millennia by rain and wind. An airplane passes overhead, bringing you back to the mechanized now.

How to best manage the Heritage Area's special elements effectively is the purpose of this Plan. By establishing a steering committee of diverse stakeholders, the Heritage Area planning effort became a true collaboration between private, public and non-profit partners who developed a common vision to protect, connect and educate the public about the many wonders of the 40,000 acre Arabia Mountain Heritage Area.

3.1 PLANNING SUMMARY

The nine-month planning process for the Management Plan began with a steering committee of key stakeholders defined in the Feasibility Study. The steering committee consisted of voting members from DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties, the City of Lithonia, and the State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources ('the jurisdictions'), as well as community residents and local businesses. A non-voting advisory group provided assistance in decision-making. The steering committee offered valuable insight into the current climate and future goals of the Heritage Area, the Plan elements, potential strategies and direction for community meetings.

A consultant team was engaged to complete the Plan and the accompanying Environmental Assessment, as required by Congress and the Secretary of the Interior under the National Heritage Area Designation. The selected consultant team consists of Ecos Environmental Design, Inc. (land planning and community facilitation), Planners for Environmental Quality (PEQ) (community facilitation), ICON architecture, inc. (heritage planning) and The Media Kitchen (interactive website design and maintenance).

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, ('Arabia Alliance') a non-profit advocacy group spearheaded the volunteer effort to build consensus among residents, civic-minded individuals, non-profit organizations, political leaders, government agencies and community activists. In 2001, the group engaged well known Heritage Area planners

ICON architecture to undertake the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study ('the Feasibility Study'). Highlights include:

- Creating a National Heritage Area based on key findings that fit designation criteria proposed by the National Park Service.
- Creating a proposed boundary for the Heritage Area.
- Defining key stakeholders including DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties, City of Lithonia, State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR), Evans Mill, Klondike, South Rockdale and Flat Rock communities, Monastery of the Holy Spirit, local churches, Mall at Stonecrest and others.
- Identifying possible themes to enhance the visitor experience based on the area's vivid history and culture.
- Recommending the completion of a Management Plan (this Plan) to comprehensively preserve and interpret the Heritage Area's natural, scenic, cultural and historic legacies.

The consultant team collected, interpreted and analyzed all data pertinent to the Heritage Area, and completed a series of inventory and analysis maps of natural, cultural, historic, scenic, recreational and economic resources. (See Appendix A).

The team implemented a Management Plan website as a communication tool throughout the planning process. The website provided additional means for gathering public input. An electronic newsletter was distributed periodically to keep stakeholders informed of the process. Maps, data, events and news items were posted on the website for public display and comment, providing many opportunities for local residents and stakeholders to become actively engaged in the Plan. Monthly meetings of the steering committee, an all-day steering committee concept charrette meeting and three broader community meetings were conducted to present findings, receive information and collect comments. During the meetings, the community was engaged in various interactive sessions, such as prioritizing

site preservation and interpretation, verifying potential venues, determining the preferred concept and selecting appropriate implementation strategies.

Summary of Community Meetings

September 2004: The consulting team, planning process, purpose and schedule were introduced. Accomplishments within the Heritage Area were highlighted, and community members provided feedback on environmental issues, challenges and educational, economic and marketing opportunities.



ECOS

Committee members review three Plan concepts for the Heritage Area

October 2004: The steering committee met for an all-day charrette to explore why the area is unique, determine what stories should be told, and where interpretation should occur. The committee analyzed community comments and determined goals. Three alternative concept plans were created.

November 2004: The consultant team refined and presented the three alternatives for community comment. Close review of data and maps was also conducted to ensure that significant resources were properly documented.

Based on comments from the community and steering committee, the consultant team merged the preferred elements from each of the three concepts into one draft concept plan. The draft concept plan was presented to the steering committee for initial feedback.

March 2005: After further design, analysis and refinement, the draft concept plan was presented at the third community meeting. Participants offered feedback on the primary elements and commented on proposed strategies and implementation priorities. The draft concept plan was amended based on community comments and the final, preferred concept plan was presented to the steering committee.

Throughout the process, the consultant team completed other necessary sections of the Plan document. First, the Environmental Assessment (Chapter 8) was prepared to determine the appropriate approach for the Heritage Area based on National Park Service (NPS) DO-12 requirements, established to determine impact assessment and resource conservation. The Environmental Assessment, and accompanying Environmental Screening form, compares the preferred concept to several alternative approaches, describing how each impacts the Heritage Area's resources, as well as the overall vision.

Second, the Interpretation Strategy (Chapter 4) details the Heritage Area themes and describes the appropriate approach for highlighting resources through potential venues and initiatives. The third section is the Implementation Program (Chapters 5-7) which completes the document and

- inventories Heritage Area resources
- outlines objective and goals
- explains proposed strategies
- identifies the responsibility of key players
- proposes a timeline and phasing of strategies and programs
- creates a funding strategy
- and describes the structure of the management entity.

At the heart of the Plan is a comprehensive framework for explaining the intriguing inter-relationships of people to their environment over time -- a cycle that will continue as the Heritage Area's rich legacy is managed in the future.

3.2 HERITAGE AREA PLAN OBJECTIVES

The overarching vision of the Plan is to protect, connect, and educate.

Adoption of this Plan by all stakeholders, including government entities, community organizations and Gateway property owners, will establish guidelines and strategies that:

- Preserve distinctive natural, historic and cultural resources as large-scale environmental and educational opportunities.
- Preserve existing landscapes from incompatible commercial and residential development.
- Limit negative environmental impacts such as air and water pollution.
- Build on partnerships between private, public and non-profit organizations to accomplish the Plan's goals.
- Create a sustainable Heritage Area that successfully achieves a balance in economic, social and environmental issues.
- Create engaging educational materials at key locations to encourage visitors to experience natural and cultural sites in new ways.
- Focus interpretation at significant landmarks or Gateways.

This Plan will

- Protect natural resources to create opportunities for fun, education and recreation.
- Educate visitors and residents about the Heritage Area's history and culture.
- Stimulate diverse tourism, filling the current void in attracting people with cultural and historic interests, as well as those interested in recreational opportunities and unique ecosystems.
- Extend the Heritage Area's existing multi-use trail system, by connecting to Stone Mountain and Atlanta.

- Provide an opportunity for the Heritage Area to become a test bed for sustainable practices, by expanding alternative transportation, preserving ecosystems, restoring riparian habitats and encouraging youth activities.
- Integrate historic preservation with ecosystem conservation.
- Engage public-private-non-profit coalitions to improve quality of life in the Heritage Area.

3.3 HERITAGE AREA PLAN GOALS

The goals evolved from initial planning efforts, and were further defined and prioritized during the steering committee and community meetings.

Cultural Preservation Goal: To protect cultural and historic resources such as:

- City of Lithonia - its historic granite structures, corridors and communities.
- Existing and former quarries and related resources.
- Existing and former farms, mill sites and other culturally significant structures.
- Cemeteries and other sacred sites.
- Native American and African-American settlements.

Preservation is best achieved by explaining the relevance of the Heritage Area through interpretive opportunities that allow visitors to understand and experience the Area's uniqueness and rare beauty first hand.

Natural Conservation Goal: To protect and restore natural resources, such as:

- Rivers, streams, lakes, waterfalls and wetlands.
- Arabia and Panola Mountains and other granite outcrops with rare plant habitats.
- Remaining wildlife such as turkeys, bob cats, owls, salamanders, song birds and habitat for migratory birds.
- Other features such as fields, forests and special micro-environments.

Future protection of the Heritage Area's distinctive landscapes and environments is critical to its sustainability. These resources are finite, and must be properly explored, viewed, and protected while

simultaneously engaging visitors and residents to appreciate their beauty and importance.

Interpretation and Education Goal: To tell the Heritage Area's diverse stories specifically:

- The geology and the land
- Granite quarrying and its impacts
- Unique ecosystems for animals and plants

By engaging the Heritage Area's schools and organized groups, the objective of protection, connection and education can be promoted throughout the region. Learning opportunities will be designed to increase:

- Appreciation of the Heritage Area's cultural and natural resources through interactive, hands-on experiences.
- Appreciation of the history of the people and their architecture.
- Appreciation of environmental education by completing an environmental school campus in DeKalb County to eventually include students K-12
- Knowledge of the region's historic impact throughout the United States.
- Knowledge of sustainable preservation and "smart growth" practices. (According to the Urban Land Institute, "smart growth" is growth that is economically sound, environmentally friendly and supportive of community livability growth that enhances quality of life.)

What do we mean by Interpretation?

Interpretation is simply an invitation to take an interest in something, to draw you in with engaging stories, hands-on activities and memorable experiences. Interpretation can take many forms in the Heritage Area. Possibilities include:

- Well designed signs and site markers
- Graphics, maps and photographs
- Video kiosks
- Audio tours on CDs, cassettes or MP3 that can be downloaded. Visitors can play sections of interest on portable audio players while walking the trails.
- Live performances, recorded music, storytellers
- Artifacts and crafts
- Guided tours with a naturalist, historian, archeologist or scientist

- Special events, festivals and re-enactments
- Unforgettable museum displays

There are always elders, still alive, such as the Goddards and the Lyons, or people already recorded in interviews by the Arabia Alliance such as the Vaughters, who have poignant stories to tell, stories that can be heard forever once captured by technology.

Recreation Goal: To expand open space and recreation opportunities by:

- Continuing to build the multi-use trail network to promote recreation and healthy transportation between residential and commercial centers, schools, parks and recreation sites.
- Promoting outdoor recreation opportunities for all ages and incomes.
- Adding acreage to existing parks and protected greenspace.
- Adding needed public facilities.

Greenspace and recreation are primary criteria for determining the livability of an area. Increasing greenspace is necessary for improved air and water quality and wildlife habitat protection, especially in a region whose pores are being paved over in concrete.

Economic Development Goal: To encourage "smart growth" and sustainability by:

- Supporting leading edge "smart growth" management techniques.
- Engaging in tourism and economic development activities that respect Heritage Area resources.
- Enhancing key publicly owned landscapes including Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Panola Mountain State Park, South Rockdale Community Park, Vaughters' Farm and others to stimulate economic vitality of the broader community.
- Encouraging a partnership team approach to interpretation and management that promotes a balance between the interests of governments and residents. Much of the Heritage Area is experiencing rapid residential development, due to its attractiveness and proximity to metro-Atlanta. Increasing tourism, providing recreational and educational facilities and

promoting community development opportunities will bring desired economic benefits. This Plan recommends a template for ways to efficiently handle future residential and commercial demands in ways that also protect the Heritage Area's quality of life and character. See Appendix H for more information on economic development potential of the Heritage Area.

3.4 DETERMINING THE PLAN CONCEPT

The diverse stories of the Heritage Area must be easily understandable by all ages. To effectively manage recreation activities, the visitor experience, environmental concerns and fiscal issues, the consultant team, steering committee and community members analyzed and evaluated five alternative approaches.

The recommended Hybrid approach, alternative 5, was selected and is presented here. For summaries of the other four alternatives considered, see Appendix I. The Hybrid Plan combines the strengths of the others to create inter-connected Routes, Focus Areas and Gateways, all designed to enhance the visitor's experience and appreciation of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area. Following is a description of the recommended approach.

Alternative 5: Hybrid Approach: Combines characteristics of Alternatives 2, 3 and 4, and creates a central Visitors Center. This concept combines primary routes discussed in the Network Concept (alternative 2), the enhancement of key landscapes and environments in the Area Concept (alternative 3) and the Gateways in the Cluster Concept (alternative 4). The Hybrid alternative simplifies the other concepts by engaging the visitor at a primary Gateway, located at Vaughters' Farm, a preserved agricultural landscape, then directing visitors to secondary Gateways located at themed Focus Areas.

The proposed Gateways are currently under different levels of protection; most are under public ownership.

The Visitors Center, or primary Gateway, located at Vaughters' Farm, provides an all-encompassing his-

toric and cultural account of the Heritage Area. The proposed Visitors Center is the central focus of interpretation, offering an overview of every Focus Area including significant wildlife, plant habitats and historic architecture. Each Gateway facility and Focus Area will highlight and interpret a different theme. Culture and Community is the theme at the primary Gateway since it is located at an historic agricultural landscape. This Gateway is to be found along existing driving and pedestrian routes, and is centrally located within the Heritage Area, close to Interstate 20, allowing visitors to easily access the other four Focus Areas and Gateways:

- Panola Mountain State Park (Natural Systems Focus Area)
- South River and Flat Rock Community (Early Settlement Focus Area)
- Lithonia Woman's Club (Granite Industry and Technology Focus Area)
- Monastery of the Holy Spirit (Spiritual Landscapes Focus Area)

Each Gateway and Focus Area, can be easily visited by an existing or proposed driving, biking, pedestrian or water route. Each route is also themed based on five distinct interpretive opportunities:

- Route 1: Land of Rocks and Rivers
- Route 2: Stone Cutters
- Route 3: Early Settlers
- Route 4: Ecosystem Excursions
- Route 5: Spiritual Experience

CHAPTER 4:

THE HERITAGE AREA PLAN



Fred Milesbko

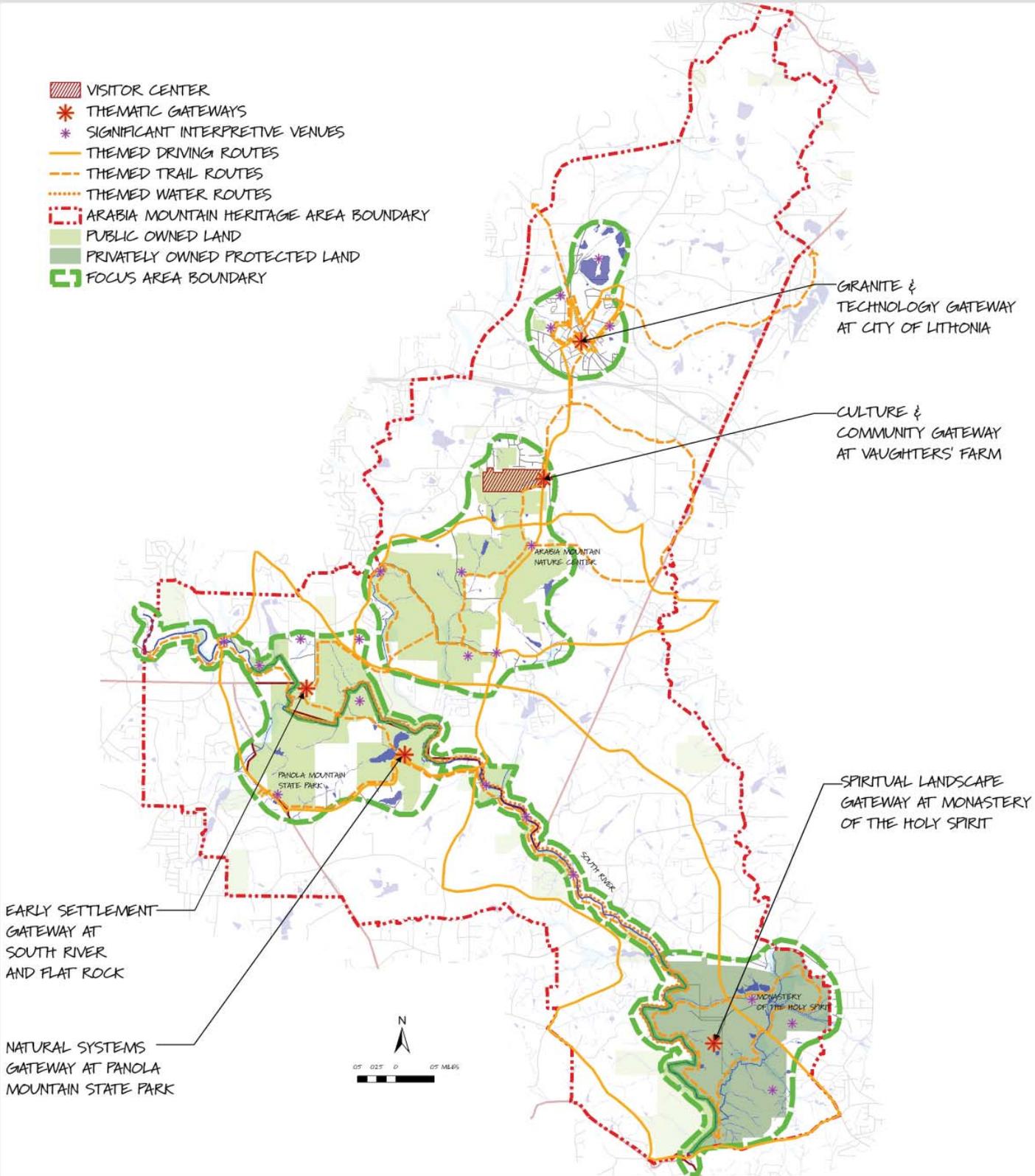
Davidson-Arabia Mountain
Nature Preserve

Protect, Connect, Educate

The preferred concept, known as the Hybrid Plan, creates designated Routes, Focus Areas and Gateways. Each Focus Area is a cultural and natural landscape with historic integrity. Focus Areas will protect the Heritage Area environments and define the sites that will be the heart of a memorable visitor experience.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE - 'THE HYBRID PLAN'

-  VISITOR CENTER
-  THEMATIC GATEWAYS
-  SIGNIFICANT INTERPRETIVE VENUES
-  THEMED DRIVING ROUTES
-  THEMED TRAIL ROUTES
-  THEMED WATER ROUTES
-  ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARY
-  PUBLIC OWNED LAND
-  PRIVATELY OWNED PROTECTED LAND
-  FOCUS AREA BOUNDARY



4.1 HERITAGE AREA FOCUS AREAS AND GATEWAYS

To determine the appropriate boundary of each Focus Area, the community and steering committee identified these cultural landscapes:

- industrial (quarries)
- natural
- agricultural
- spiritual
- early settlement

Significant interpretive venues that the community immediately highlighted include:

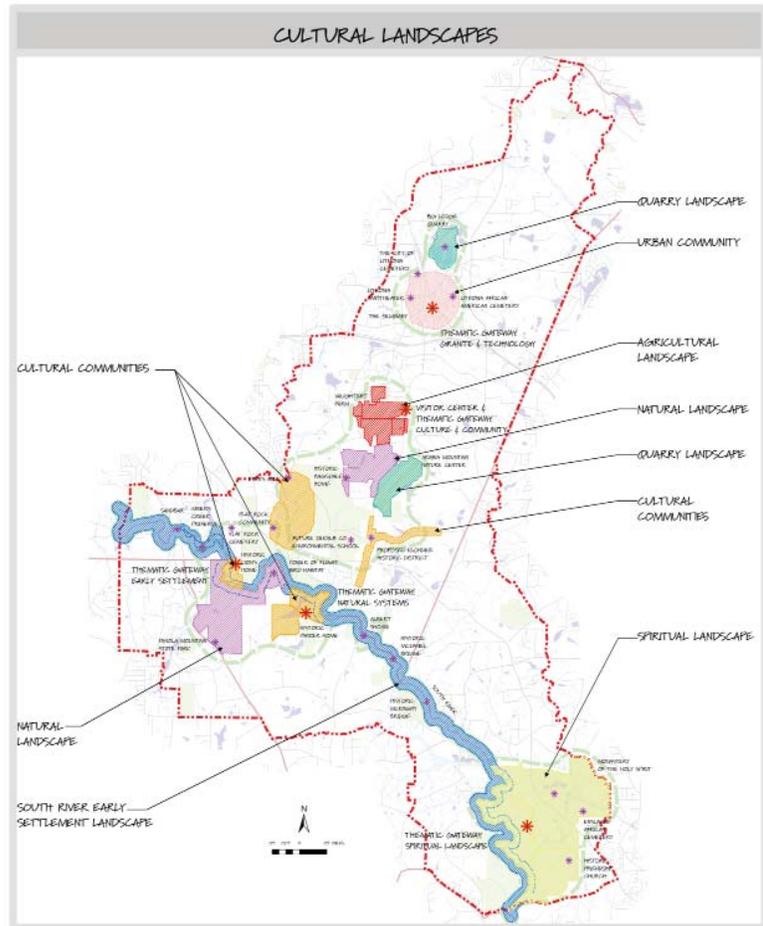
- Arabia and Panola Mountains
- City of Lithonia
- Vaughters' Farm
- South River
- the Monastery of the Holy Spirit

From this effort, five Focus Areas were selected:

- Culture and Community
- Natural Systems
- Early Settlement
- Granite Industry and Technology
- Spiritual Landscape

By defining five, overarching themes, tremendous amounts of information and choices can be more easily digested and experienced.

The best place for visitors to begin is the Heritage Area Visitors Center, the primary Gateway. People will receive a fascinating overview of the many offerings and opportunities to explore. From there, visitors 'customize' their experience at four additional Focus Areas and Gateways by traveling along specific themed Routes.



Cultural Landscapes Map



Kathryn Kolb

Vaughters' Farm--the last remaining dairy farm in DeKalb County

Focus Area: CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Gateway: Vaughters' Farm

Welcome Facility: Vaughters' Farm original home (expanded)

Visiting this facility will provide comprehensive background on the entire menu of historic, cultural and natural resources in the Heritage Area, offering in-depth information geared to visitors of all ages.

Georgia Department of Natural Resources acquired Vaughters' Farm in 2003 because of its powerful historic and cultural significance. Identified as the last working farm in DeKalb County, the 142-acre property is located in the heart of the Heritage Area on Klondike Road near I-20. The community and steering committee selected Vaughters' Farm as the Heritage Area Visitors Center and Gateway for its open, rolling topography, picturesque barn and historic granite home, all special features that reflect the Heritage Area's history and culture well.

This Gateway will offer hands-on exhibits, maps, brochures and interpretive kiosks to tell the stories of farming and quarrying. With easy access from the interstate, proximity to PATH Foundation's trail

and Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, the Vaughters' Farm Gateway will orient visitors to the entire 40,000-acre Heritage Area and encourage exploration to other Focus Areas and Gateways.

To preserve the integrity of the farm, it is recommended that the original home, located to the east of the farm across Klondike Road, be converted to the Visitors Center and include interpretive exhibits on relationships between the people, land and granite. An expansion or new facility can provide classrooms, staffed information desk, small auditorium, meeting spaces, hands-on exhibits and demonstrations, bike rentals, restrooms and dining facilities. The existing barn structures and pastoral landscape of Vaughters' Farm should be preserved to maintain the picturesque view from Klondike Road. A driving scenic overlook, and Klondike Road improvements with fencing and native plantings, could further enhance the experience. Remaining forest, wetland and pasture on the site should be protected to provide important wildlife habitat.

Other highlights of the Culture Focus Area include:

- Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve
- Evans Mill and historic Klondike communities
- Ragsdale Home (relocated) and other historic homes
- future DeKalb County environmental high school
- several historic churches and cemeteries

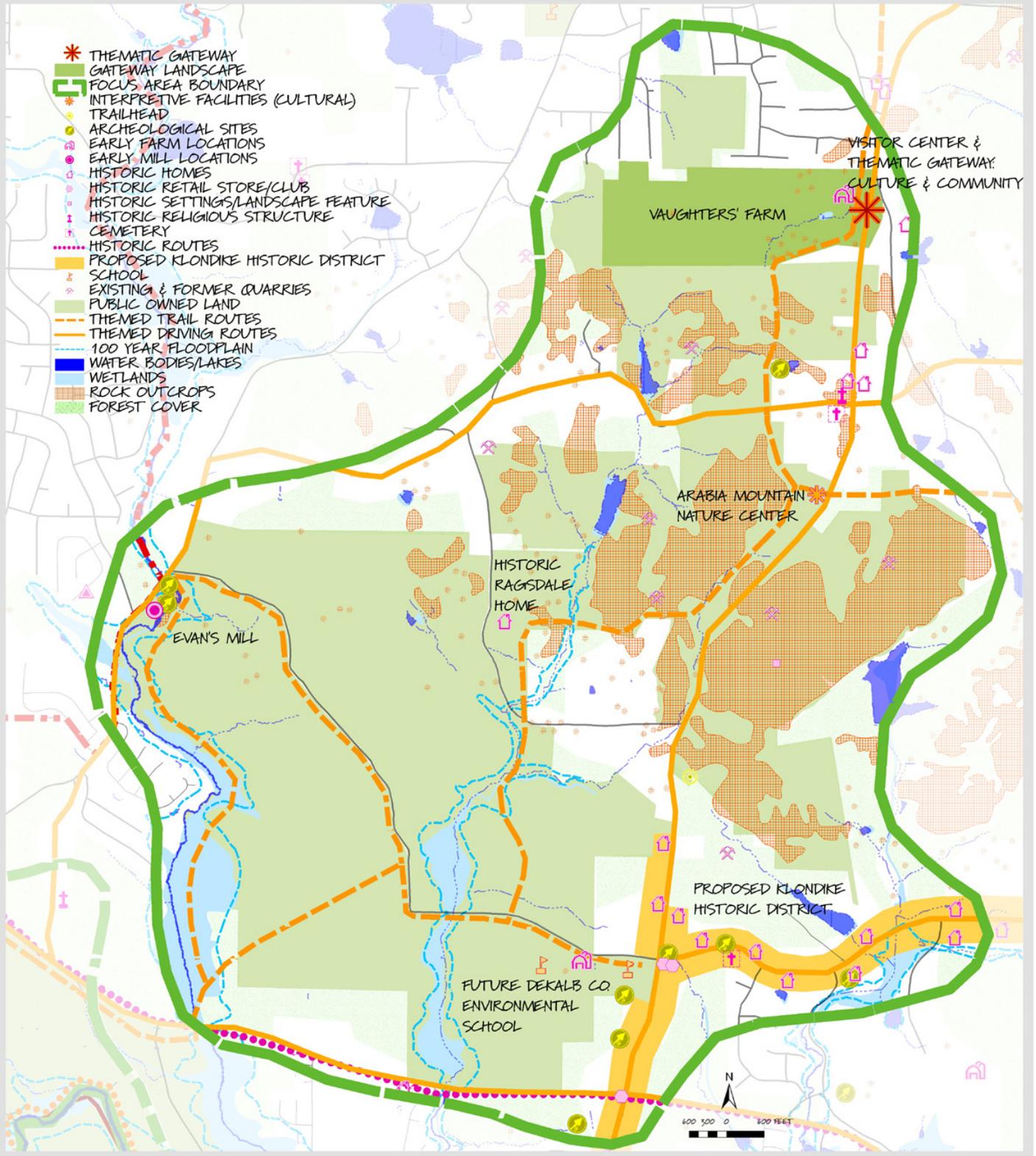
Landscapes to be highlighted:

- agricultural landscape of Vaughters' Farm
- natural and quarry landscapes of Arabia Mountain

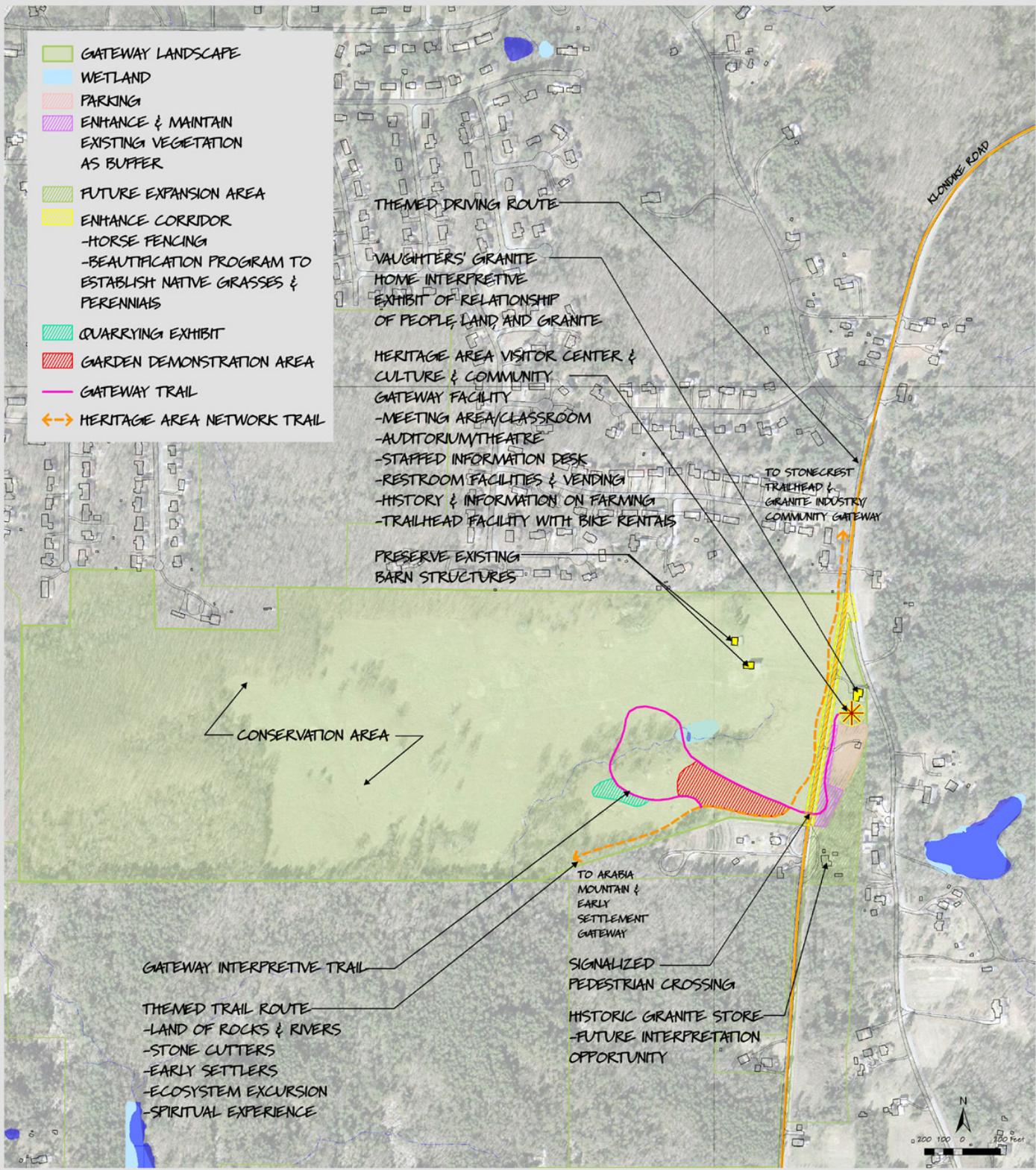
Cultural communities to be highlighted:

- Klondike
- Evans Mill

CULTURE & COMMUNITY FOCUS AREA



VISITOR CENTER & CULTURE & COMMUNITY GATEWAY at VAUGHTERS' FARM





South River near the Lyon Property in
DeKalb County

Focus Area: NATURAL SYSTEMS
Gateway: Panola Mountain State Park
Welcome Facility: Georgia State Park
Education and Demonstration Center

Panola Mountain State Park and its environs are one of the finest granite ecosystems in the United States. Established in 1969, the park encompasses granite outcrops, fields, forests, wetlands, waterways and hosts a diverse selection of trees, shrubs, mosses, lichens and flowers that provide a colorful year round show. Highlights include Sunnysbells, Sparkleberry, Yellow Daisy, Fringetree and brilliant red diamorpha. Several plant species are endemic to granite outcrops, and others grow only in a few habitats such as Arabia and Panola Mountains. Adapting over time to the seemingly harsh, rocky conditions, these plants need protection. Many are susceptible to foot damage. Several plants in the Heritage Area already appear on State and Federal lists of rare, threatened and endangered species.

Wildflowers are a common sight. Spiderwort and pokeweed are found in forested areas, while daylilies, goldenrod and Queen Anne's lace are found at the forest edge and in fields. The rock outcrops support unusual old cedar trees and a dwarf oak known as Georgia oak.

The Parker Home, built around 1822, the oldest home in Rockdale County, was also the site of Southernness Golf Course. The homestead sits on the South River adjacent to Panola Mountain, and became an 18-hole golf course in the late 1900s. The original home was preserved as well as vegetation buffers on the South River. Archeological sites along the riverbanks have also been protected. Acquired by the Georgia DNR in 2004, combined with the acquisition of the neighboring Alexander estate with its large Alexander Lake, these sites have greatly expanded Panola Mountain State Park.

It is recommended that the historic Parker homestead be renovated for use as an interpretive venue, including restoring the former golf course to a natural setting and returning it to wildlife and wetland habitats. The Gateway Welcome Facility can be located in the Georgia State Park Education and Demonstration Center, a future structure to be built near the Parker home. Meeting areas, classrooms, a staffed information desk, hands-on demonstrations, restrooms and dining facilities can be provided. The diverse ecology of mountain versus riparian habitats can be showcased, enhanced by future interpretive trails linked to the PATH system.

The neighboring Alexander estate can expand recreation opportunities by providing picnic facilities, playgrounds and overnight campsites near Alexander Lake. The existing Alexander home can provide restrooms, an information center and parking. There are also stunning opportunities to build observation areas, a scenic overlook and offer attractive places for parties, family reunions and other gatherings on both the Alexander and Parker sites. Entertaining exhibits about granite geology and the habitats it supports can be offered, and

visitors can be encouraged to experience this lovely property on a nature trail that was once, in part, a golf path.

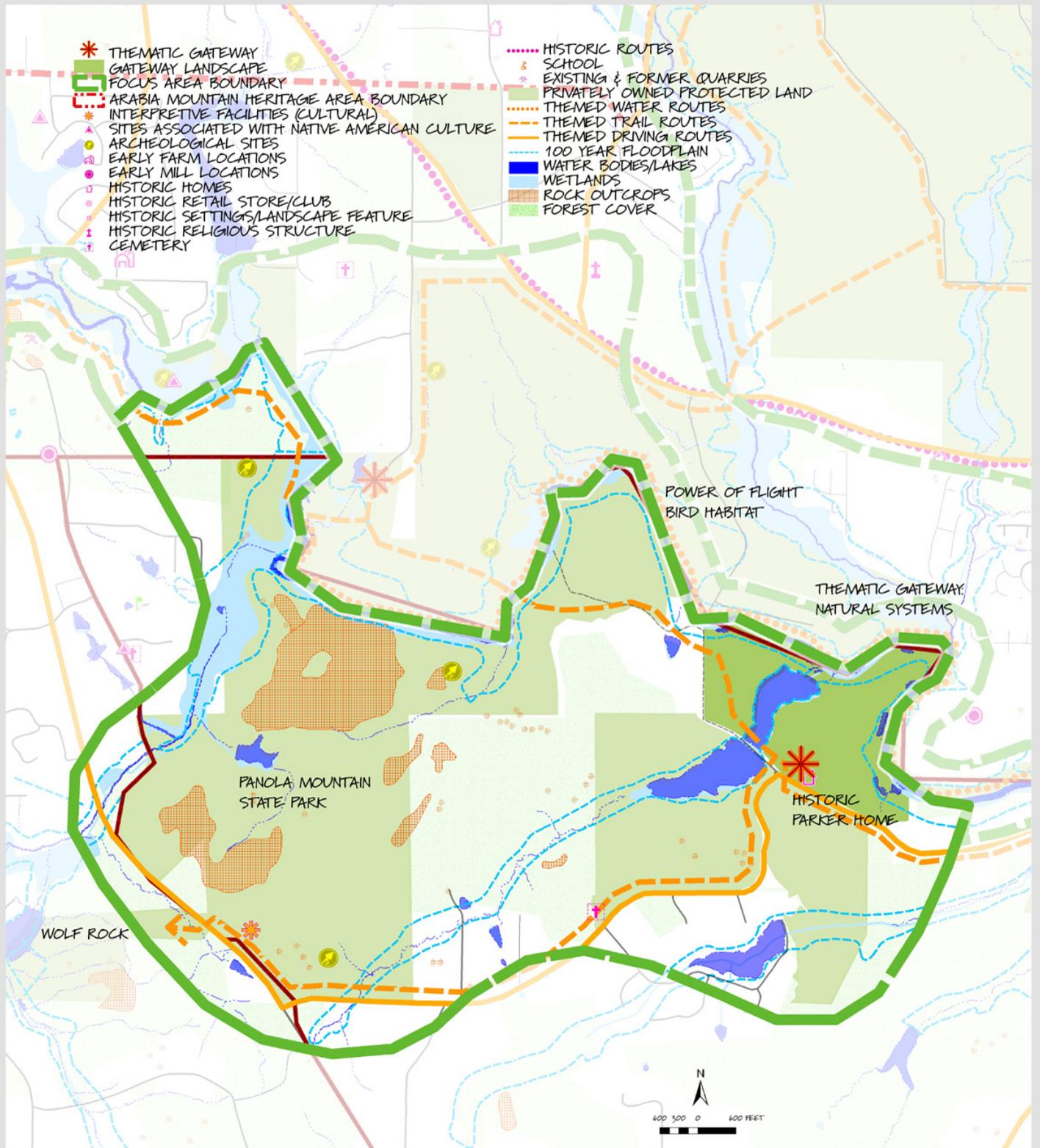
A highlight of the Natural Systems Gateway can include a canoe and kayak launch for tours on the South River. This recommendation was the impetus for the water Route System proposed during the planning process, and will greatly expand recreational, educational and cultural opportunities. The water route can also link to Miners Creek, the South Rockdale park and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit.

The Power of Flight exhibit at Panola Mountain State Park is also here and features a unique riparian corridor with sandbars, native vegetation and bird habitats. The exhibit is a special resource for protecting the delicate environment of migratory birds.

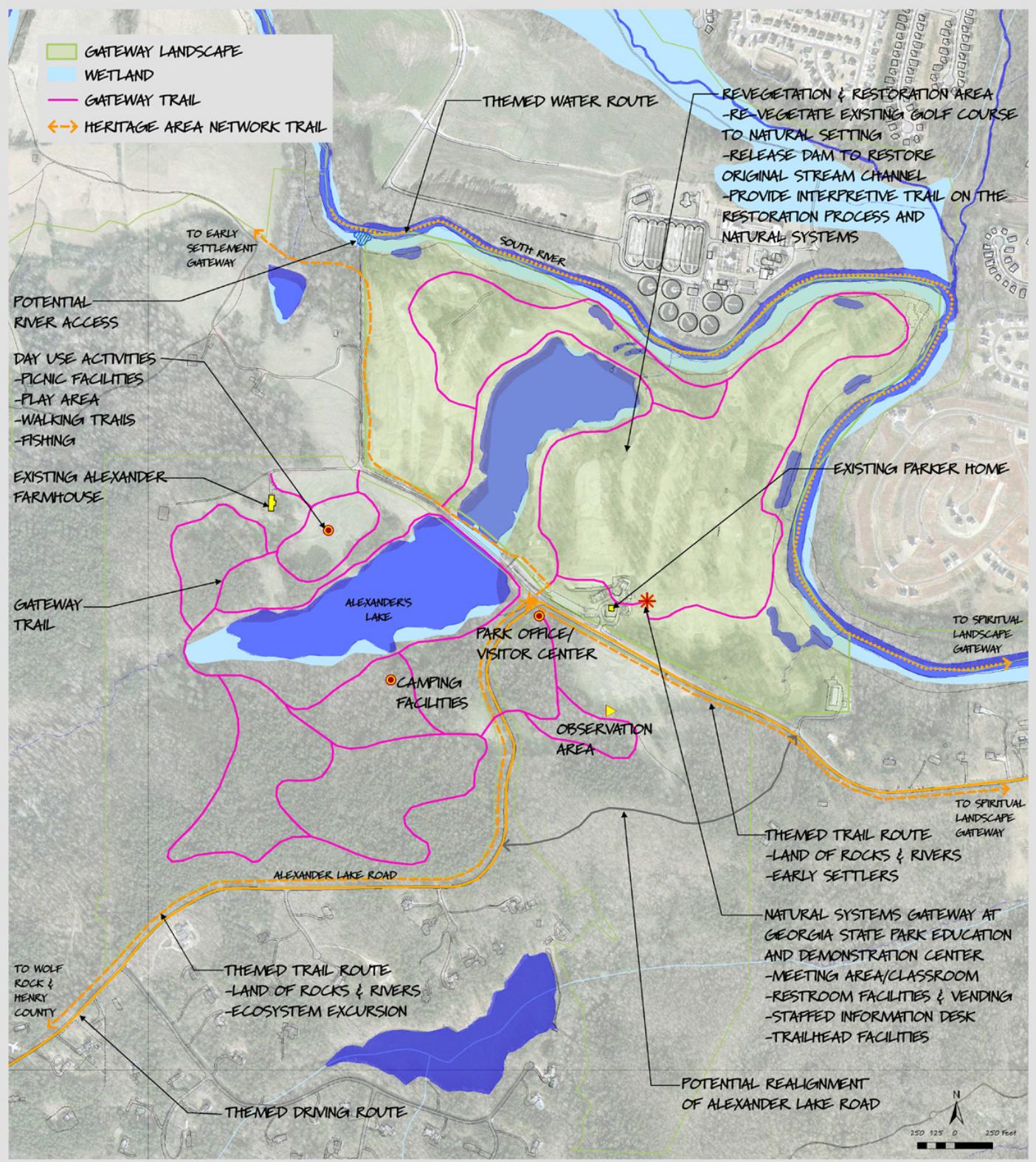
Sites to be highlighted:

- Panola Mountain and The Power of Flight exhibit
- Historic Parker homestead
- Alexander Lake with proposed overlook and gathering places
- Former golf course restored as wildlife and wetland habitats
- South River canoe and kayak launch
- Miners Creek Preserve
- South Rockdale Park and former DeCastro estate
- Monastery of the Holy Spirit property

NATURAL SYSTEMS FOCUS AREA



NATURAL SYSTEMS GATEWAY at PANOLA MOUNTAIN STATE PARK





Parker House

Focus Area: EARLY SETTLEMENT

Gateway: South River and Flat Rock

Community

Welcome Facility: Lyon's Farm

Historians and archeologists have found artifacts along the South River dating back to the Archaic Period (8000 BC - 1000 BC). Native Americans traveled the South River transporting soapstone. Early European settlers farmed the land and raised cattle. Granite quarrying spurred the growth of European and African-American communities. Evidence of settlement sites include farms with residences and historic out-buildings, granite mining sites, unmarked and marked cemeteries and industrial and commercial sites; all offer fascinating insight into the daily lives of people generations ago.

Visitors to the Early Settlement Focus Area can begin exploration at the proposed South River and Flat Rock Gateway at Lyon's Farm. Built circa 1822 to 1823, it is believed to be the oldest home in DeKalb County.

The early African-American community of Flat

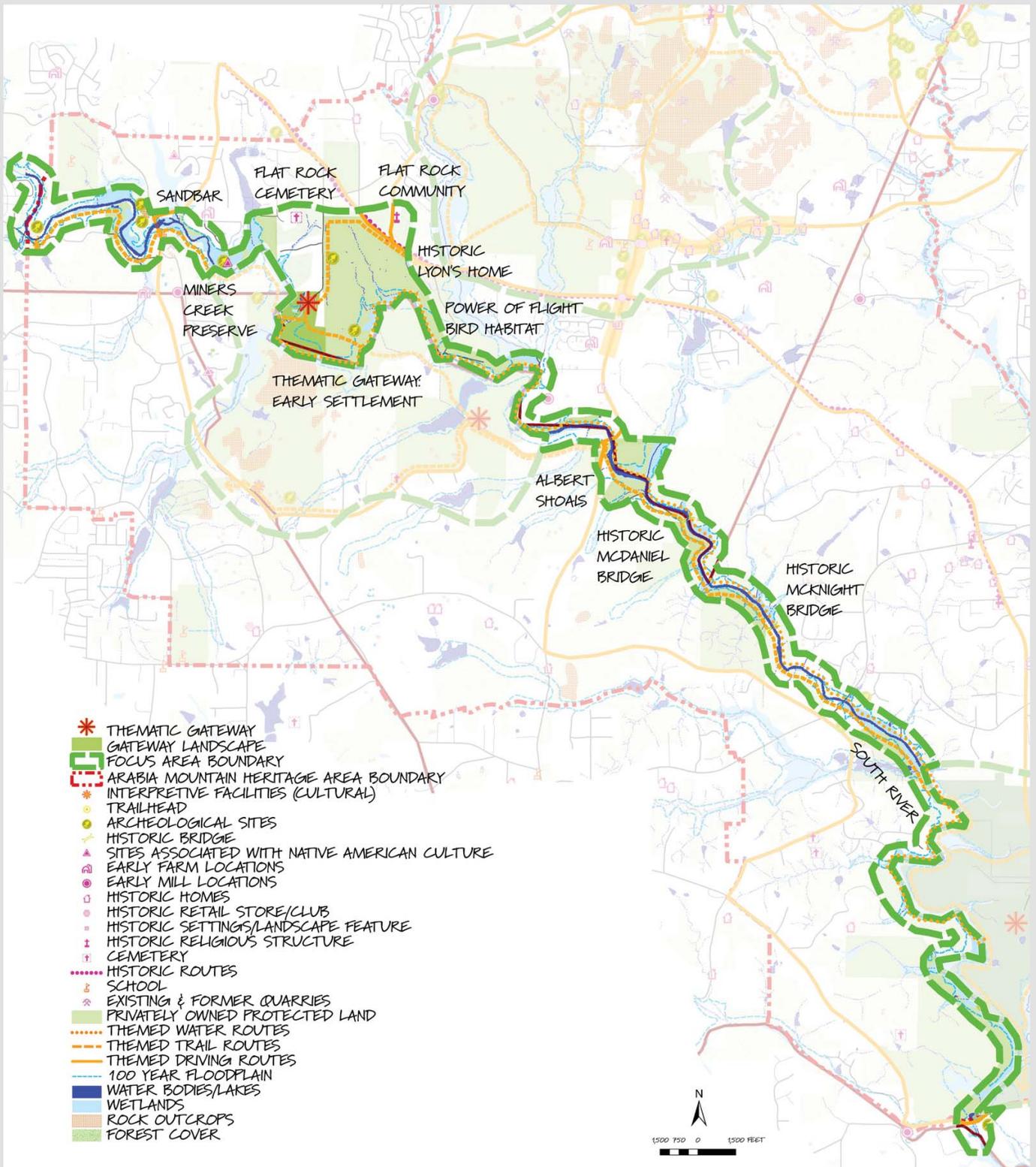
Rock, along with Lyon's Farm, can illustrate the cultural significance of this Focus Area, while the South River can be highlighted as the main natural resource. Early mill sites, farms and Native American archeological sites exist up and down its banks. Significant landmarks include Miners Creek Preserve, a Native American site dating back thousands of years, Flat Rock Cemetery (circa 1820), Panola Shoals and Pole Bridge Shoals mill sites, and the sites of historic bridges.

The story of how the Heritage Area was settled, by whom and why, can be explained through entertaining displays, photographs and maps. Archeological artifacts can highlight the South River's role in providing transportation and livelihoods for diverse cultures.

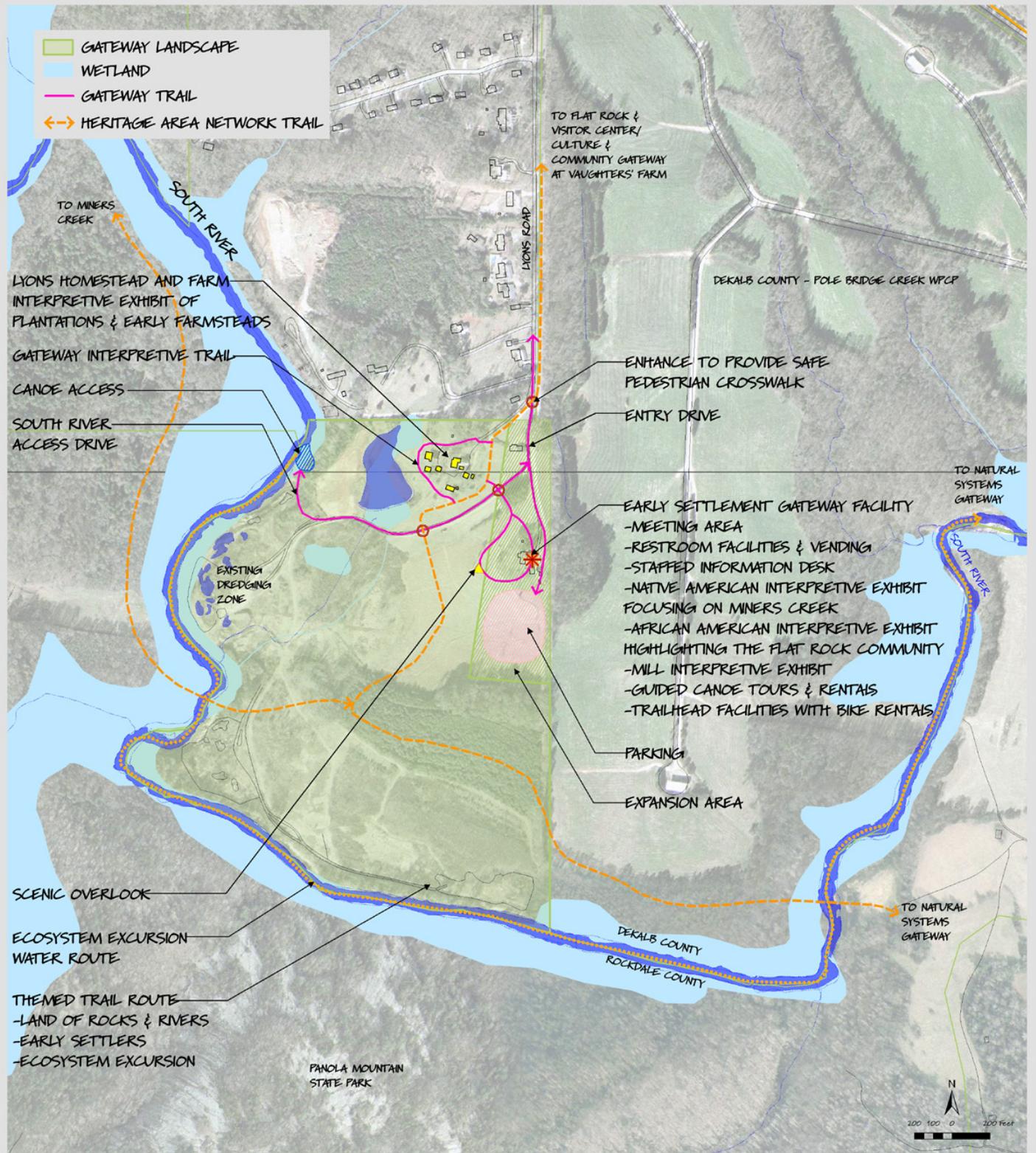
Due to its historic significance, Lyon's Farm and home should be preserved as a Welcome Facility with enthralling exhibits on early settler life. An interpretive walking trail can also be created. The PATH system can connect visitors to the historic community of Flat Rock, as well as Native American sites along the South River, as well as the Parker home, the oldest in Rockdale County, circa 1822, just across the river. A canoe and kayak put-in area can provide easy access to the river. Cultural amenities to be highlighted:

- Lyon's Farm and historic home and Parker home
- Native American sites along South River including Miners Creek Preserve
- African-American community of Flat Rock and its historic cemetery and church site
- Old water powered mill sites

EARLY SETTLEMENT FOCUS AREA



EARLY SETTLEMENT GATEWAY at SOUTH RIVER & FLAT ROCK





ECOS

Lithonia Woman's Club

Focus Area: GRANITE AND TECHNOLOGY

Gateway: City of Lithonia

Welcome Facility: Lithonia Woman's Club building

The Heritage Area's geology features several forms of granite, granite gneisses and schist. Gneiss is granite like rock with bands and layers of minerals. Schist is granite like rock made of laminated minerals, primarily micas.

Granite is the primary reason why the Heritage Area is environmentally special to the region and the country. The impressive granite outcroppings at Arabia and Panola Mountains are two of the state's largest exposed granite occurrences, and are found only in the Piedmont region. Arabia Mountain is estimated to be 475 million years old. Significant rock formations also occur along the waterways and scattered through the woods. Albert Shoals and Panola Shoals in the South River and Evans Mill Shoals on Pole Bridge Creek are two examples of how rock formations create beautiful shapes and textures and were once the sites of water powered mills. They also play a valuable role in stabilizing stream beds and river banks by slowing water flow during storms.

Granite from Lithonia has been prized first as building stone, then later for its density and high

performance in curbing and roadway construction. As stated earlier, local quarries provided stone for historic buildings across the nation. The Lithonia area continues to be a major source of granite for metropolitan Atlanta. Major quarries at Rock Chapel and Pine Mountain are still active today.

Due to Lithonia's prominent contribution to the discovery, quarrying and use of granite, its businesses, homes, Main Street, cemeteries and other granite structures were selected as an ideal place for visitors to explore the Granite Industry and Technology Focus Area. It is recommended that the 1929 Lithonia Woman's Club

serve as the City of Lithonia Gateway facility, as an outstanding example of an entirely granite structure. Currently under the stewardship of the Arabia Alliance, this Gateway would be a gathering and information center, providing background on the importance of granite and Lithonia's evolution. Its central location, one block from Main Street, provides easy access to other prominent venues. The Lithonia Woman's Club will also serve as a trailhead along the PATH trail, providing an off road connection to Vaughters' Farm Gateway and Visitor Center just two miles south. Exhibits on the Lithonia Speedway and Country Club, both no longer in existence, can provide further insights into Lithonia's role in shaping the social fabric of the African-American community in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Group and self-guided walking and bike tours can be the primary avenue for education, allowing visitors to experience cultural sites such as:

- Lithonia African-American Cemetery and City of Lithonia Cemetery
- historic Main Street and Masonic Lodge
- The Seminary (listed on the National Register of Historic Places)
- Lithonia Park and Stewart Amphitheater and other sites built of granite

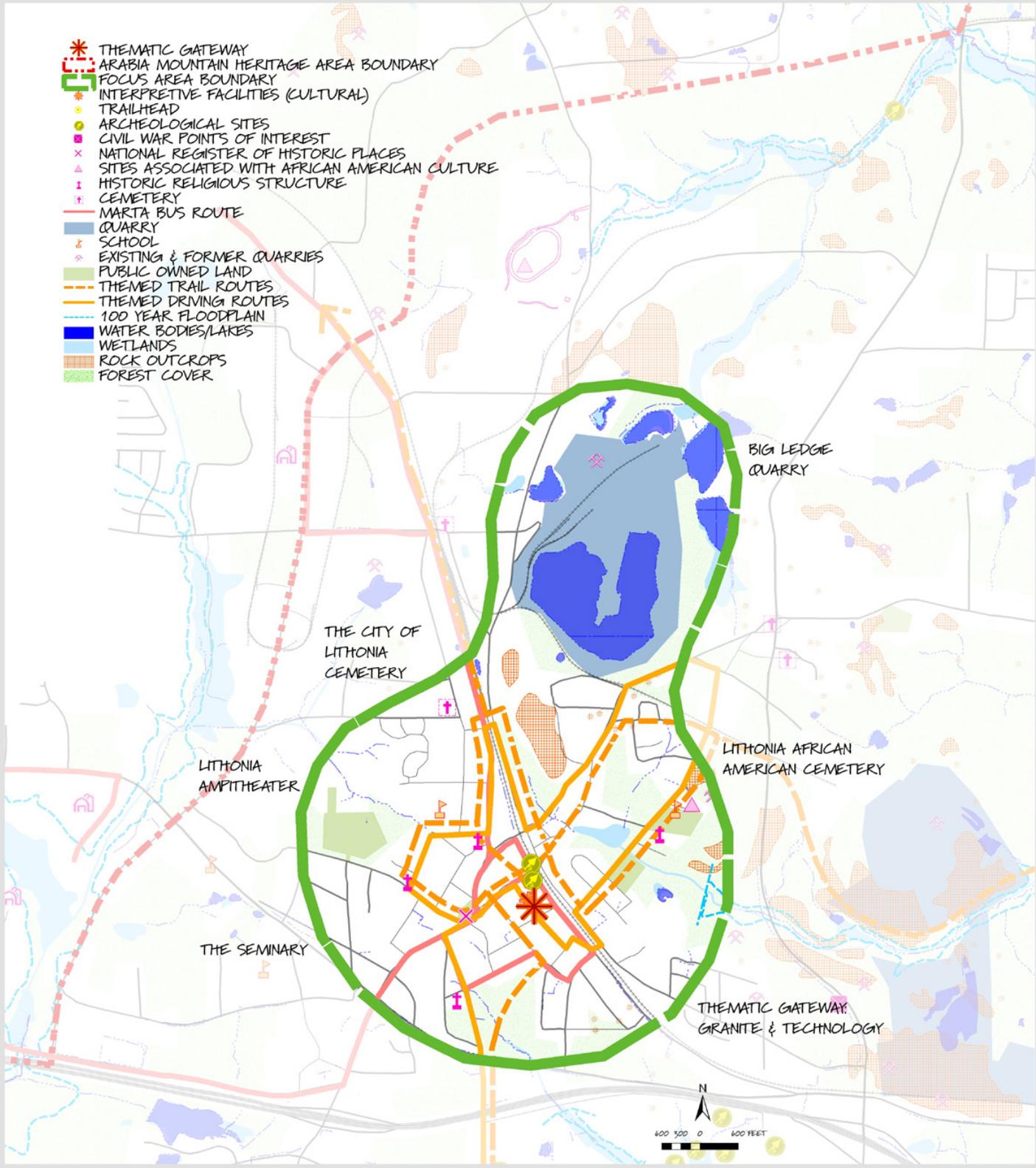
Tours can be customized from this Gateway to showcase the City's architecture, history and cultural diversity.

The community also suggested that a granite museum be created in Lithonia to highlight the evolution of the granite industry. It could be supported by partnerships with the quarry industry. Community comments indicated that a Lithonia granite museum would be a catalyst for economic redevelopment and would complement the City's recent streetscape and transportation improvements spurred by the Atlanta Regional Commission's 2003 Livable Centers Initiative Project.

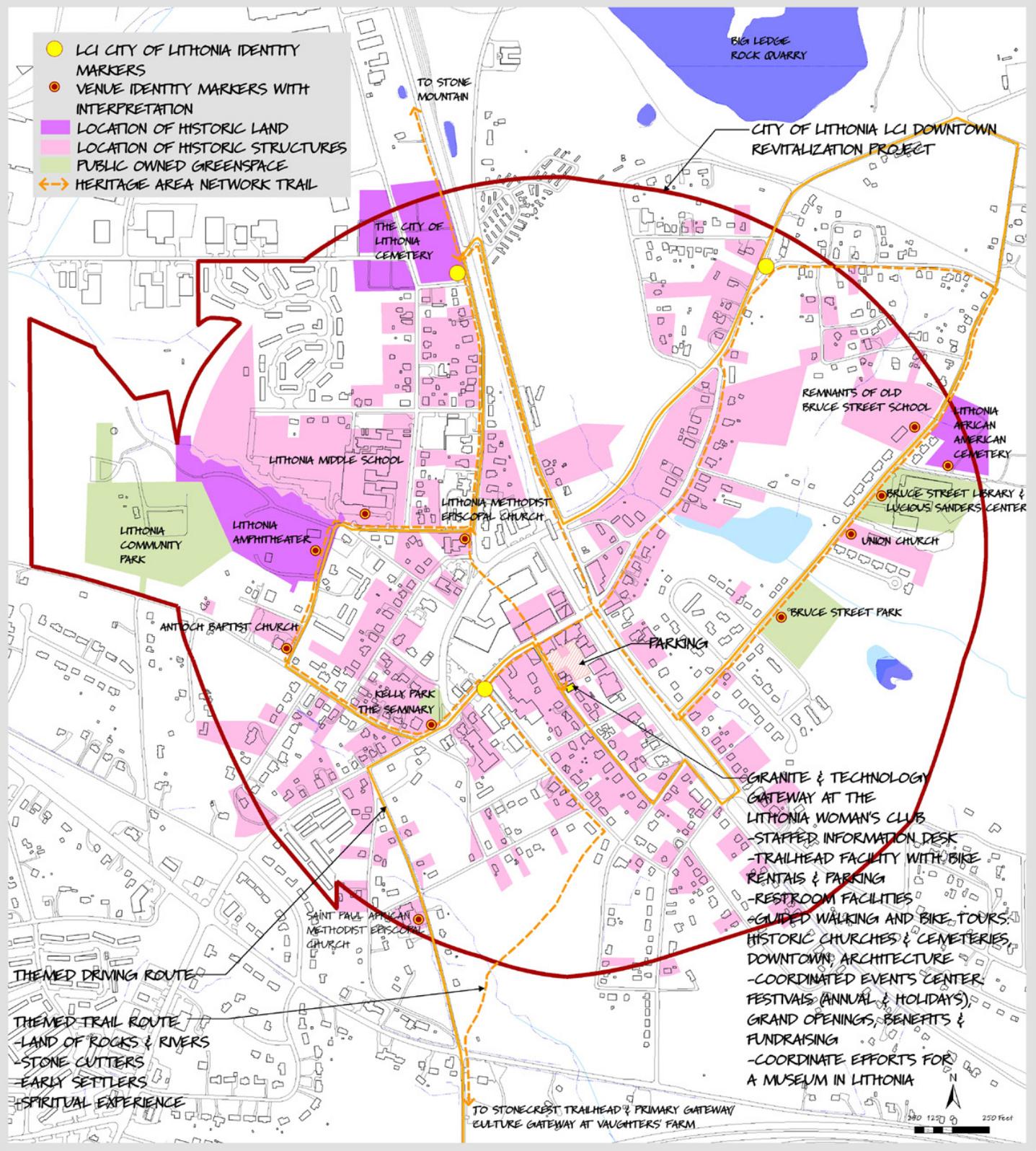
The Lithonia Woman's Club Gateway could also assist in marketing the Heritage Area by organizing special events, such as annual and holiday festivals, benefits and fundraisers. As a trailhead along the PATH trail system, the Lithonia Woman's Club could offer bike rentals, a staffed information desk with maps and brochures, parking, restrooms and vending facilities.

GRANITE & TECHNOLOGY FOCUS AREA

-  THEMATIC GATEWAY
-  ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARY
-  FOCUS AREA BOUNDARY
-  INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES (CULTURAL)
-  TRAILHEAD
-  ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES
-  CIVIL WAR POINTS OF INTEREST
-  NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
-  SITES ASSOCIATED WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE
-  HISTORIC RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE
-  CEMETERY
-  MARTA BUS ROUTE
-  QUARRY
-  SCHOOL
-  EXISTING & FORMER QUARRIES
-  PUBLIC OWNED LAND
-  THEMED TRAIL ROUTES
-  THEMED DRIVING ROUTES
-  100 YEAR FLOODPLAIN
-  WATER BODIES/LAKES
-  WETLANDS
-  ROCK OUTCROPS
-  FOREST COVER



GRANITE & TECHNOLOGY GATEWAY at CITY OF LITHONIA





ECOS

Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Rockdale County

Focus Area: SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE
Gateway: Monastery of the Holy Spirit
Welcome Facility: Susong homestead

Residents and visitors often claim, and even sense that the alignment of Arabia and Panola Mountains has a powerful spiritual energy. There's something mysterious and awe-inspiring about being near huge expanses of exposed rock and the fragile ecosystems that have survived there for hundreds of millions of years. The unusual plants that thrive in sparse vernal pools in the granite are a source of wonder and mystery. For many people, nature itself is a temple for worship.

By using the Monastery of the Holy Spirit as a Gateway, natural and spiritual connections can be made. Founded in 1944, the 2,000-plus acre property is the largest greenspace in Rockdale County. The Monastery grounds can provide fascinating educational opportunities including a nature center, a nature trail with points of interest and other outdoor exhibits that highlight the lovely landscape.

The Monastery's role in fostering the agrarian economy in the Heritage Area can also be showcased. As good stewards of the land for over 60 years, the monks have uncovered a vast collection of important Native American artifacts while plowing the landscape. Some of the pottery shards and arrowheads date back 10,000 years. Because of their dedication to preserving wetlands and riparian habitats, the monks have placed conservation easements on their wetlands, documented 88 varieties of butterflies and 48 species of dragonflies in addition to numerous song birds native to the Monastery.

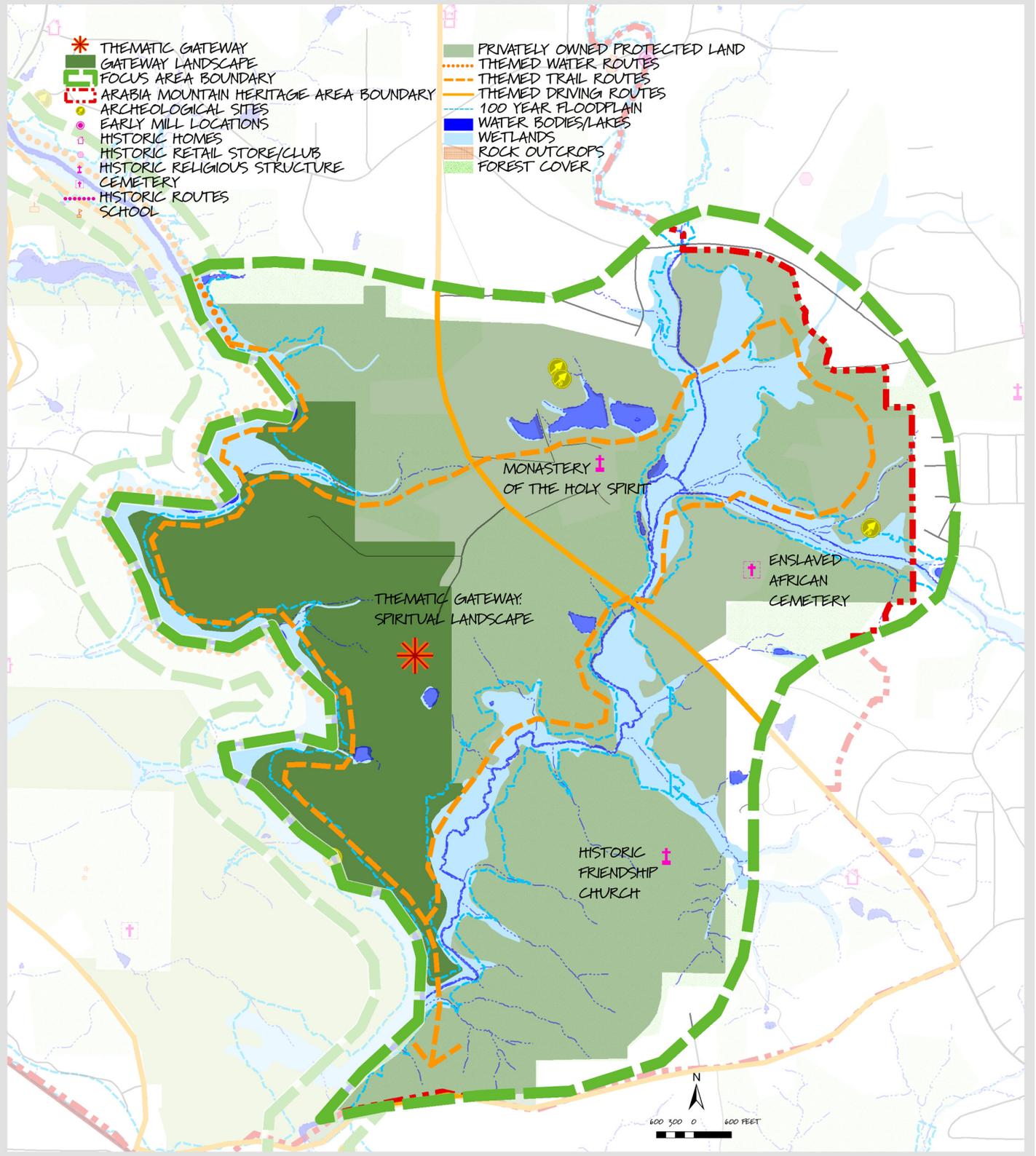
Two outstanding exhibits that can be offered here can feature Native American culture as well as the diversity of butterflies, dragonflies and moths and other wildlife. The original granite Susong home can serve as an attractive nature center with meeting spaces, exhibits, information desk and restroom and dining facilities. The planned driving, walking and water Route System includes connections to this Gateway. Interpretive trails and guided walking and canoe tours can direct visitors to exhibits, outdoor gathering spaces and classrooms, wildlife habitats and other natural landmarks. In addition, horse trails can be offered, and possibly connect to active, private horse farms nearby.

Outdoor exhibits at the Spiritual Landscape Gateway can feature nature's abundance including beaver dams, wetlands, native trees and sustainable timber harvesting. Archeology and history exhibits can be offered in renovated brick and granite barns. Trails can also lead visitors to remnants of the historic Friendship Church, old slave cemeteries and archeological sites.

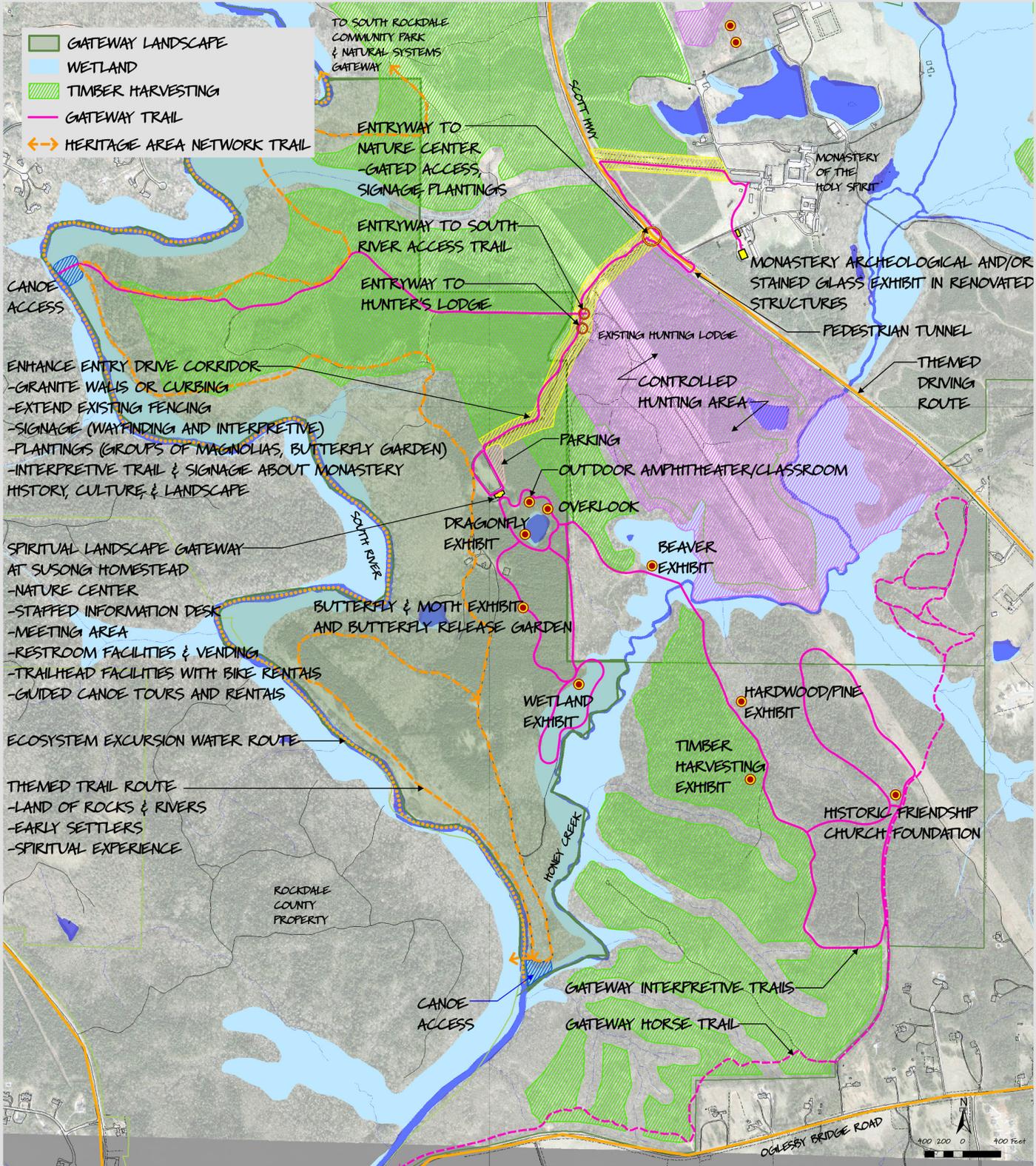
Sites to be highlighted:

- Panola and Arabia mountains
- Monastery of the Holy Spirit
- Historic homes, churches, slave cemeteries and Native American archeological sites.

SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE FOCUS AREA



SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE GATEWAY at MONASTERY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



4.2 HERITAGE AREA ROUTE SYSTEM

By featuring special places, nature trails and historic sites, themes bring the history and culture of a place to life.

While Focus Areas and Gateways described earlier provide much needed exhibits on the Heritage Area's significance, the community requested a cohesive way to connect them. Driving, walking and canoeing routes provide that connection and a full menu of choices. By creating a distinct and varying Route System for interpretation, visitors will gain a deeper appreciation of all that the Heritage Area can offer them.

The Plan recommends this three-prong Route System for education and recreation. Comprised of driving, walking (hard and soft surface trails and sidewalks) and water routes, the conceptual layout was based on proximity to venues and their relation to the Heritage Area's greenspace and environmental features, existing historic resources and community preferences.

The walking route coordinates with the Georgia Department of Natural Resource's plans for both Panola Mountain State Park and Vaughters' Farm, as well as the ongoing completion of the multi-use trail system by PATH Foundation. By the end of 2005, eight miles of paved trails are complete within the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area.

Each route features at least two types of mobility. Based on findings from the Feasibility Study, as well as input from the community planning process, the following themed routes are recommended.

HERITAGE AREA ROUTE SYSTEM

POTENTIAL THEMED ROUTES

'LAND OF ROCKS & RIVERS'

- (TRAIL)
- (DRIVING)

'STONE CUTTERS'

- (TRAIL)
- (DRIVING)

'EARLY SETTLERS'

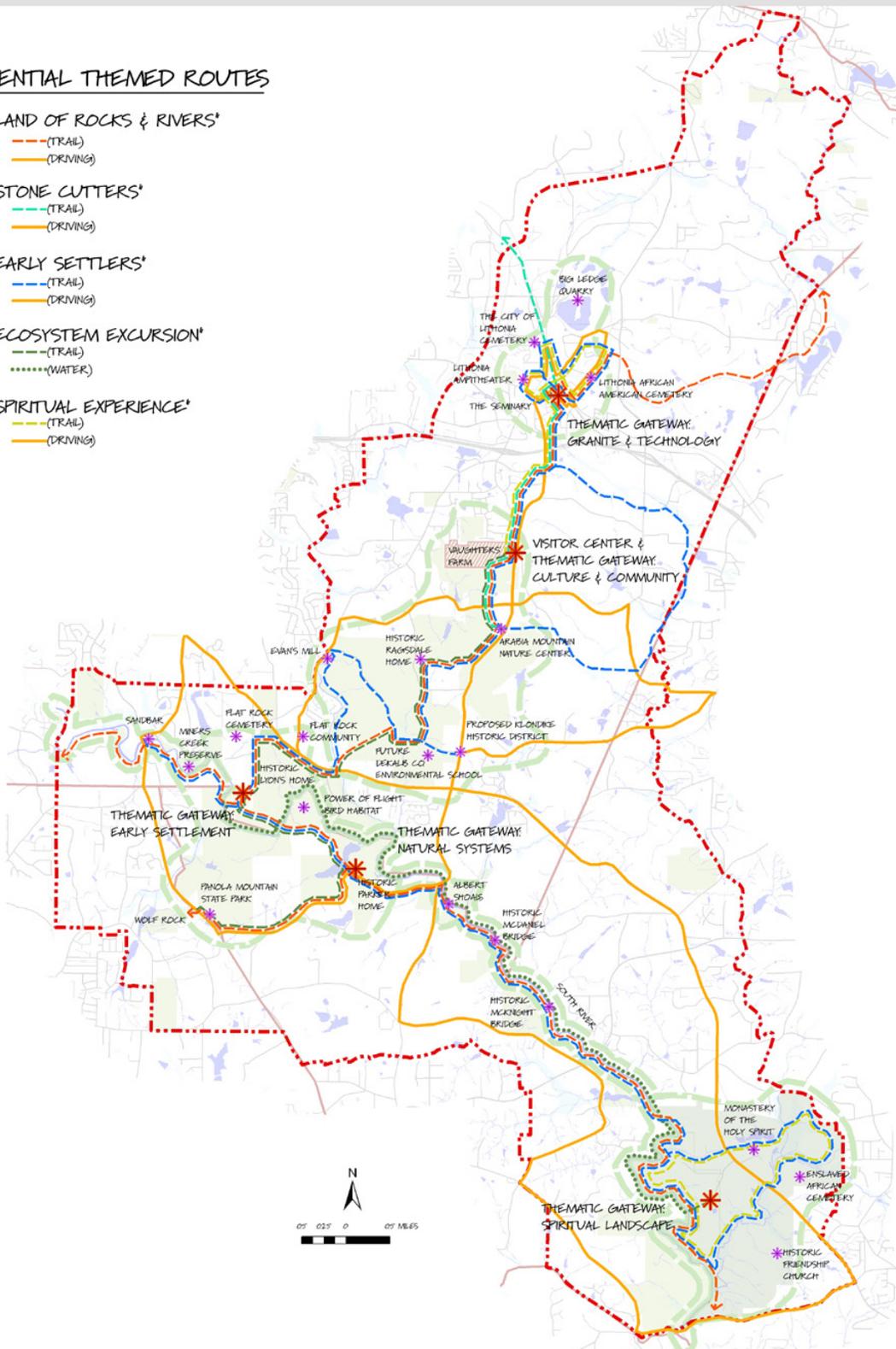
- (TRAIL)
- (DRIVING)

'ECOSYSTEM EXCURSION'

- (TRAIL)
- (WATER)

'SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE'

- (TRAIL)
- (DRIVING)



Arabia Alliance



Remains of an early homestead

Arabia Alliance



Granite outcrops at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

ECOS



Klondike Historic District cemetery

Themed Route #1: Land of Rocks and Rivers
Primary modes: Driving and walking

This route defines complex relationships between people and the land. The Heritage Area's granite mountains and major waterways had a profound influence on the people and their trades. The Land of Rocks and Rivers theme becomes the backbone for the entire Route System, stretching north to south connecting the Yellow River and the City of Lithonia to the South River and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. The Route connects all five Gateways. Key venues along this walking and driving route include the Lithonia African-American cemetery, the Lithonia Woman's Club, Vaughters' Farm, Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, the historic Ragsdale home, Flat Rock cemetery, the Lyon's property, Miners Creek Preserve, Panola Mountain State Park, the historic Parker homestead, McDaniel and McKnight bridge sites and the Susong homestead.

THEMED ROUTE - 'LAND OF ROCKS & RIVERS'

POTENTIAL THEMED ROUTES

'LAND OF ROCKS & RIVERS'
 - - - (TRAIL)
 — (DRIVING)



Fred Miles/eko



Pools in the granite outcrops of Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

ECOS



African-American cemetery in the City of Lithonia

ECOS



Remains of Bruce Street School in the City of Lithonia

Themed Route #2: Stone Cutters

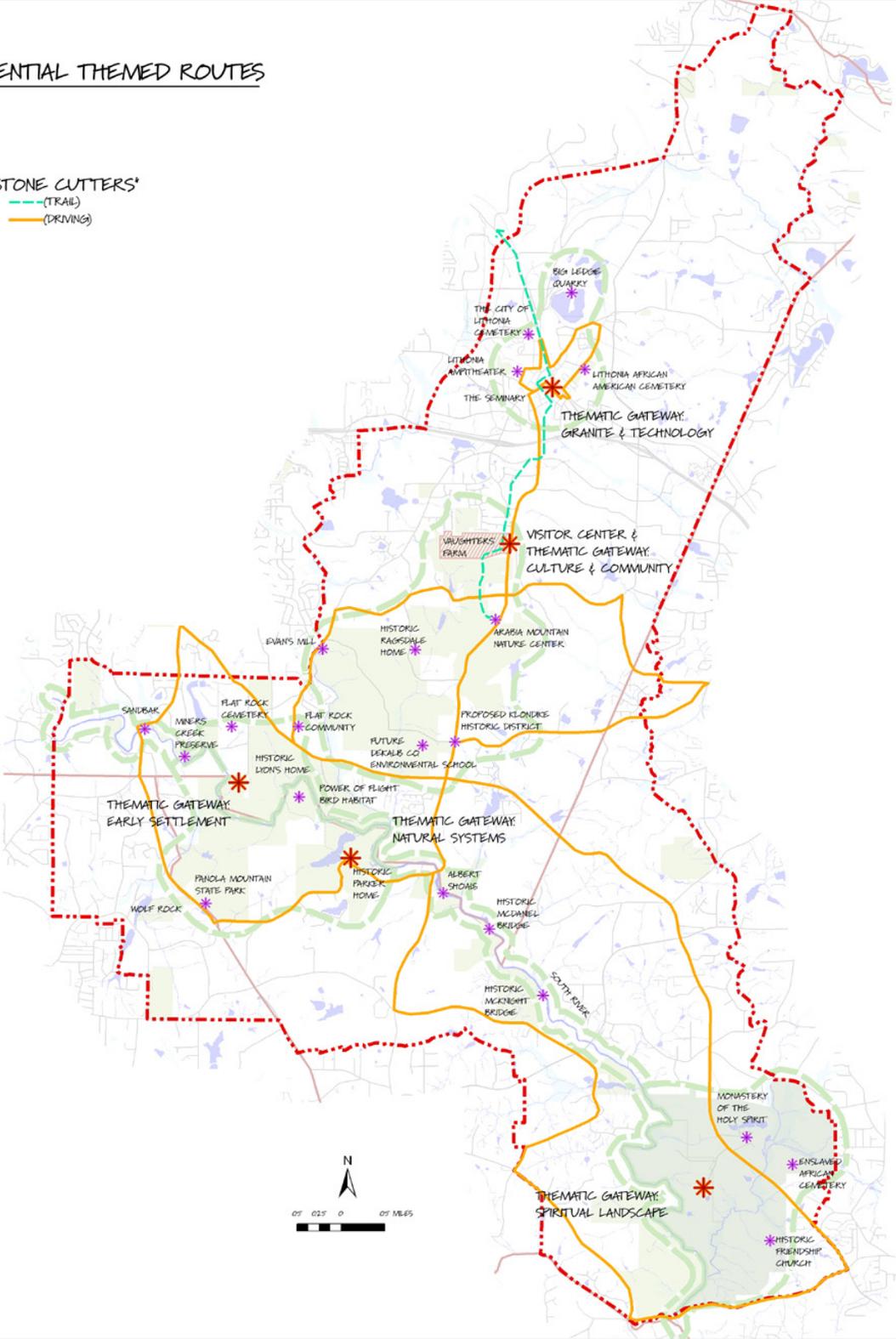
Primary modes: Driving and walking

This route showcases the dynamic history of the granite industry and its local, regional and national impacts. Lithonia granite is valued for its density, color, durability and rarity. Coupled with an expanding railroad system, granite quarrying boosted the City of Lithonia culturally and economically. Lithonia granite was sought after for public works projects around the nation. The route will showcase the significance of the granite industry and tell the story of the contributions made by European immigrant craftsmen and African-American stone cutters. Important venues along the trails and driving routes include former quarries, granite architecture, the City of Lithonia and historic cemeteries.

THEMED ROUTE - 'STONE CUTTERS'

POTENTIAL THEMED ROUTES

'STONE CUTTERS'
 --- (TRAIL)
 --- (DRIVING)





ECOS

South River

Theme Route #3: Early Settlers

Primary modes: Driving and walking

This route introduces visitors to the cultural diversity, traditions and values of the Heritage Area's first inhabitants. The driving and walking routes trace the imprint of generations by highlighting historic communities, sites and architecture. The route begins in the City of Lithonia, encompasses historic homesteads such as Ragsdale, Lyon, Parker and Housworth and explores the historic communities of Flat Rock and Klondike, ending at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit which was farm land for generations before the monks arrived. Interpretive venues include Native American archeological sites, historic homes and early mill sites and farms.



ECOS

Klondike Historic District



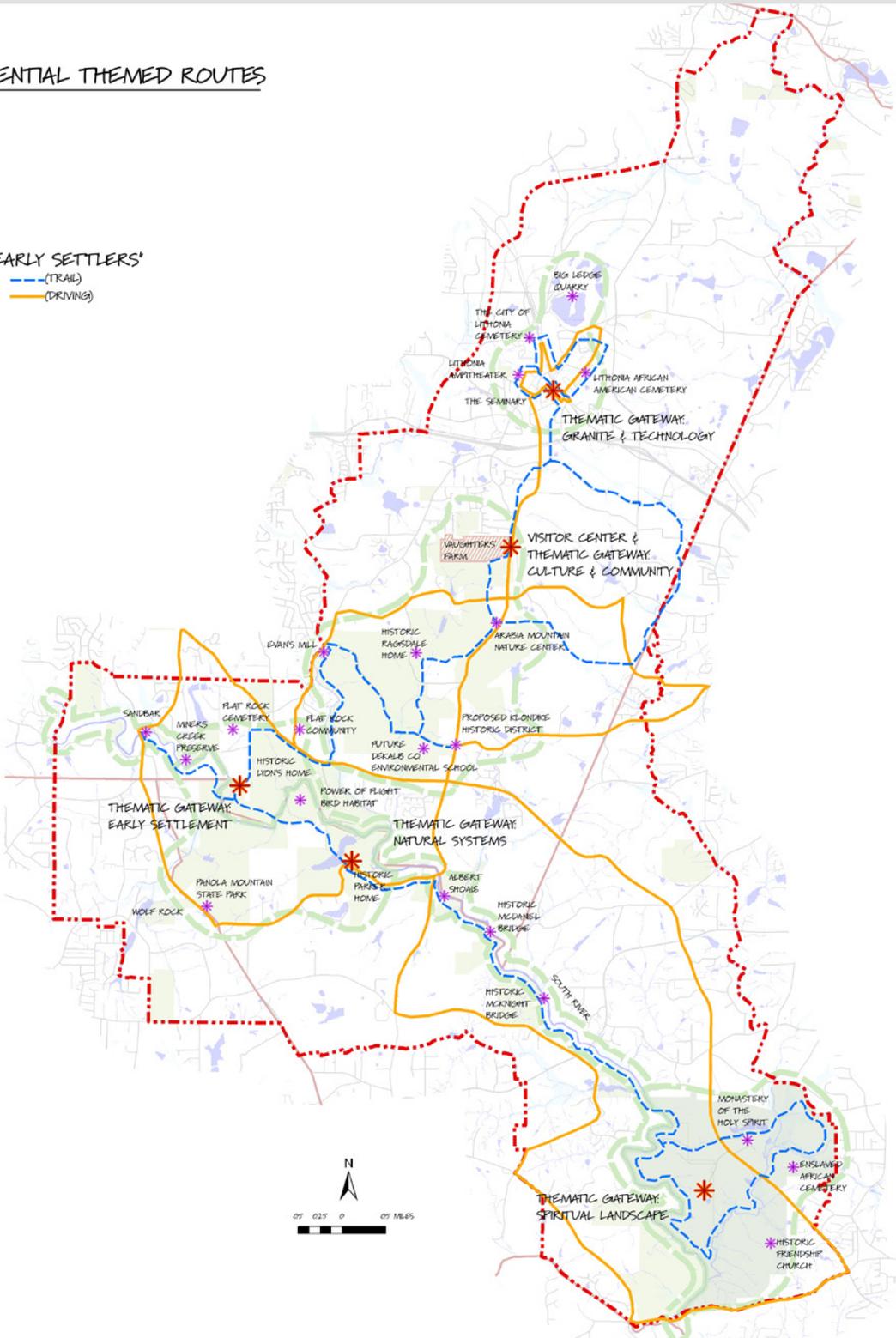
ECOS

Lyon's homestead along the South River in DeKalb County

THEMED ROUTE - 'EARLY SETTLERS'

POTENTIAL THEMED ROUTES

'EARLY SETTLERS'
 - (TRAIL)
 - (DRIVING)



ECOS



Alexander Lake

Fred Milesko



Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

Fred Milesko



Prickly Pear found in the Heritage Area

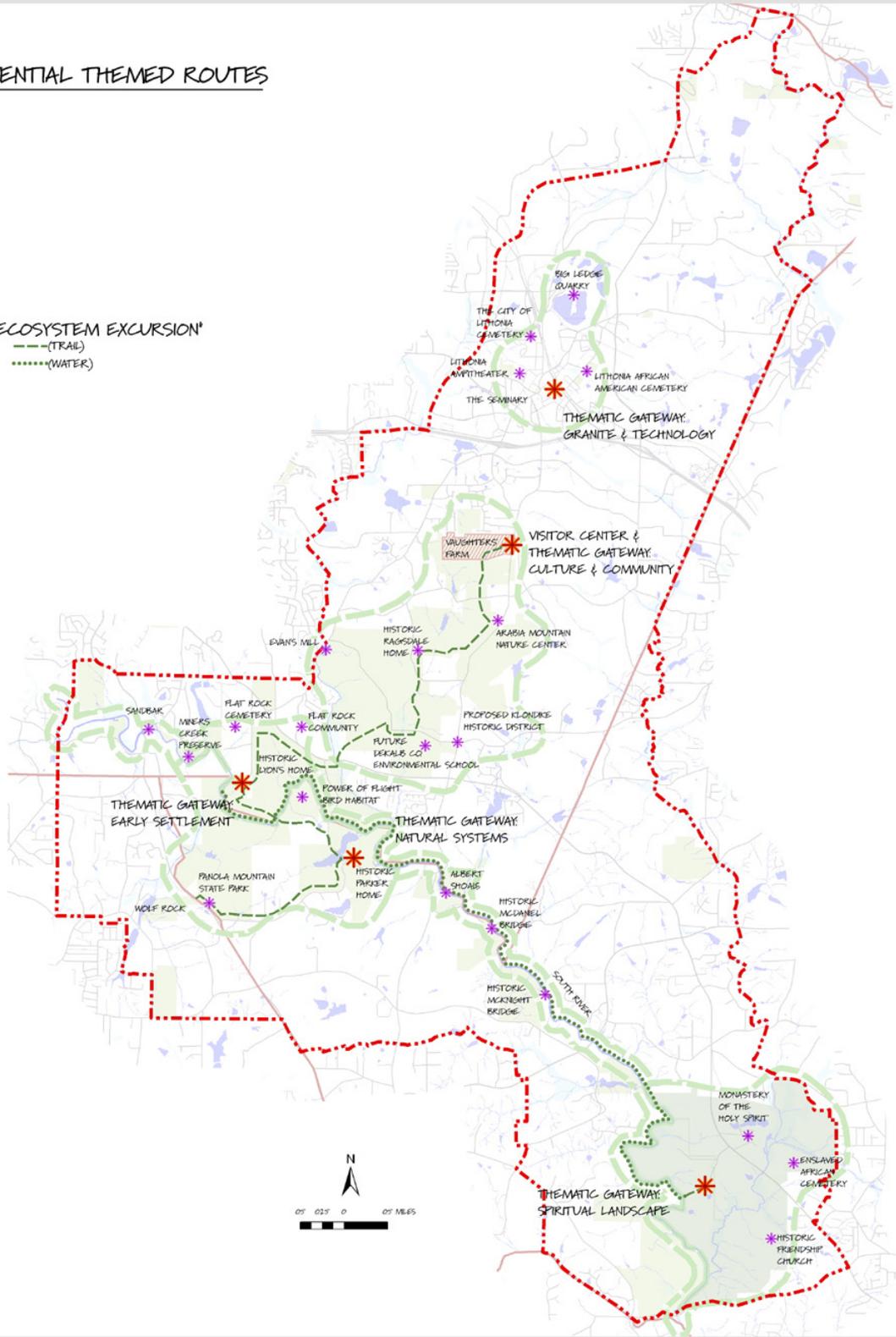
Theme Route #4: Ecosystem Excursion
Primary modes: Walking and canoeing

This route uses walking trails and rivers to explore the Heritage Area's breath-taking granite, river and forest ecosystems. Granite outcrops, fields, forests, wetlands and waterways are home to a diverse selection of trees, shrubs, mosses, lichens and flowers, as well as abundant wildlife. Many plants are endemic to granite outcrops and vernal pools, and found few places on earth besides Arabia and Panola Mountains. Rock formations in and along the rivers create beautiful visual interest and provide important environmental benefits. The trail and water routes allow visitors to experience these ecosystems up close which will encourage environmental stewardship in future generations. Facilities such as the Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE) and nature centers at Arabia and Panola Mountains will play a significant role in interpreting the Ecosystem Excursion theme. Other venues of significance are the South River, Albert Shoals and DeKalb County's future environmental high school. This groundbreaking project, which could become a role model around the country, will be located next to Murphey-Candler Elementary School at Klondike and Browns Mill roads, to minimize land disturbance. The actual building, as well as the curriculum, will actively engage students in environmental studies with an emphasis on connections to natural treasures found in the Heritage Area. The site is adjacent to greenspace at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and is connected to the PATH trail, offering countless opportunities for students, faculty and the public to experience nature's lessons first hand.

THEMED ROUTE - 'ECOSYSTEM EXCURSION'

POTENTIAL THEMED ROUTES

'ECOSYSTEM EXCURSION'
 - (TRAIL)
 (WATER)



Arabia Alliance



Summit view on top of Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

Theme Route #5: Spiritual Experience

Primary modes: Driving and walking

This Route celebrates the religious history and spirituality of the land. Native Americans flourished here as far back as 10,000 years ago, leaving artifacts and mysteries about their culture. The importance of religion is evident at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, heir to a 1,000-year-old tradition. Though we have all heard of monasteries, very few people have actually been to one. Visitors to the property experience a tranquil sense of calm and well being. Spiritual retreats, monastic vocation training and daily prayers for the public are offered.

Of course, the landscape itself suggests there's something supernatural. Visitors often find spiritual meaning in the peacefulness and permanence these unusual granite landscapes exude. Sunrises and sunsets, rushing waters, the complex patterns in miniature flowers, the rustling of wildlife, and light glistening across vernal pools all bring us closer to the beauty and spirituality in nature.

Interpretive venues in addition to the Monastery include Native American sites, historic granite churches and cemeteries, Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and Panola Mountain State Park.

ECOS



Church in the Klondike Historic District

4.3 VENUE CONNECTIVITY

Organizing and presenting the Heritage Area's multifaceted features, in ways that are understandable and meaningful, will be achieved through this integrated system of Focus Areas, Gateways and Routes.

ECOS

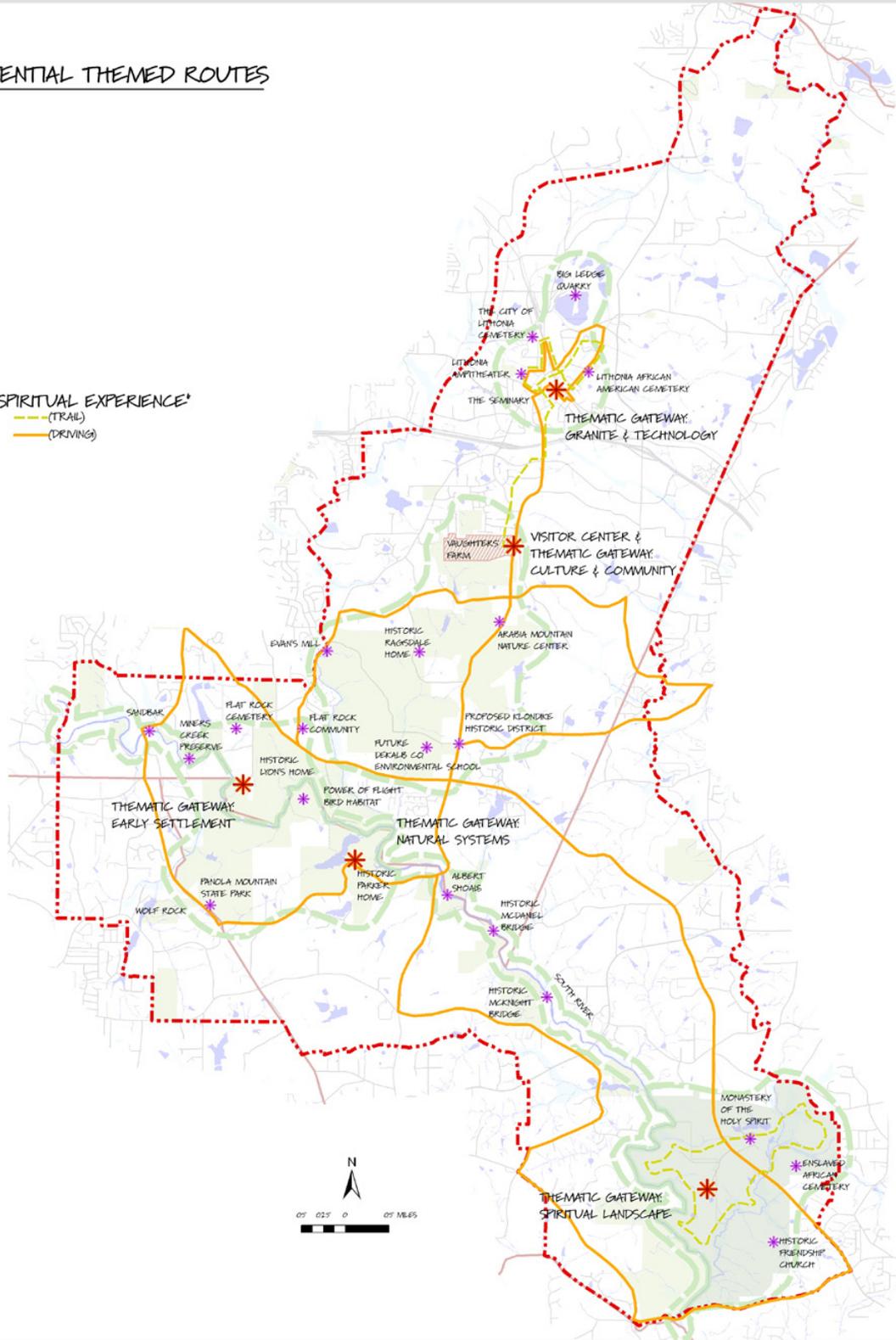


Christ Emmanuel Church in the Flat Rock Community

THEMED ROUTE - 'SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE'

POTENTIAL THEMED ROUTES

'SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE'
 - - - (TRAIL)
 — (DRIVING)



VENUE IN FOCUS AREA	SIGNIFICANCE	THEMED ROUTES				
		Land of Rocks & Rivers	Stone Cutters	Early Settlers	Ecosystem Excursion	Spiritual Experience
CULTURE AND COMMUNITY FOCUS AREA						
Visitor Center & Gateway: Vaughters' Farm	Last working farm in DeKalb County, Pictorial Landscape	●	●	●	●	●
Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve	Granite monadock, unique ecosystems	●	●		●	●
Ragsdale Home	1890 structure			●		
Klondike Historic District and Community	Crossroads of Klondike & South Goddard Rd., former center of commerce with structures dating back to 1840			●		
Future DeKalb County Environmental School	Environmentally responsive campus with ecologically focused curriculum				●	
Evans Mill	Remnants of historic mill & cascading rock shoals			●		
GRANITE AND TECHNOLOGY FOCUS AREA						
Gateway: City of Lithonia	Community established around the railroad & supported a thriving Granite Industry	●	●	●		●
Lithonia Woman's Club	1929 Granite Clubhouse		●	●		

VENUE IN FOCUS AREA	SIGNIFICANCE	THEMED ROUTES				
		Land of Rocks & Rivers	Stone Cutters	Early Settlers	Ecosystem Excursion	Spiritual Experience
GRANITE AND TECHNOLOGY FOCUS AREA (CONTINUED)						
The Seminary	National Register of Historic Places, 1895, former school, boarding house, & private residence		●	●		
Lithonia Amphitheatre and Park	Granite structure part of the historic Lithonia Park, 1940s to early 1950s		●			
The City of Lithonia Cemetery	1850s – Present, most gravestones date 1960s – 1920s			●		●
Lithonia African American Cemetery	1850s - Present			●		●
Railroad & Spur Tracks	Lithonia began & grew up around, vital to Lithonia Granite Industry		●	●		
Big Ledge Quarry	Active Quarry since 1890s		●			
Bruce Street Community	African American Community established by 1895, includes historic Union Church & granite ruins of 1938-1960s Bruce Street School		●	●		●
Proposed Lithonia Historic District	239 contributing structures/sites, 1830s Cross Roads community formed, 1856 Cross Roads incorporated as City of Lithonia	●	●	●		●

VENUE IN FOCUS AREA	SIGNIFICANCE	THEMED ROUTES				
		Land of Rocks & Rivers	Stone Cutters	Early Settlers	Ecosystem Excursion	Spiritual Experience
EARLY SETTLEMENT FOCUS AREA						
Gateway: South River & Flat Rock	Flat Rock is one of the first African-American settlements in the area & the South River has hosted early settlers dating back 12,000 yrs with early nomadic people	●		●	●	●
Sandbars	Part of South River Ecosystem	●			●	
Miners Creek Preserve	Native American archeological site from 5,000 years ago to proto-historic time			●		
Flat Rock Cemetery	Oldest known African-American cemetery in DeKalb County 1820-1956, New cemetery 1960-present			●		●
Lyon's Home and Farm	Oldest home in DeKalb County, 1822-23			●		
Albert Shoals	Rock formation in South River, falls 25 ft in distance of 300 ft	●			●	
McDaniel Bridge	Remnants remain of granite abutments			●		
McKnight Bridge	Former bridge & mill			●		
Everett Property	Contains cultural, historic, and environmental resources			●	●	

VENUE IN FOCUS AREA	SIGNIFICANCE	THEMED ROUTES				
		Land of Rocks & Rivers	Stone Cutters	Early Settlers	Ecosystem Excursion	Spiritual Experience
EARLY SETTLEMENT FOCUS AREA (CONTINUED)						
DeCastro Nature Preserve	100 acre preserve with pedestrian suspension bridge			●	●	
South Rockdale Community Park	176 acres with mile long nature trail and picnic facilities				●	
NATURAL SYSTEMS FOCUS AREA						
Gateway: Panola Mountain State Park	Features unique ecosystems and wildlife of the South River and the National Natural Landmark of Panola Mountain. Park expansion will offer increased recreational opportunities	●		●	●	●
Parker Home (part of Panola Mountain State Park expansion)	Oldest home in Rockdale County, built in approx. 1822, home of last cotton farmer in area			●		
Alexander Estate (part of Panola Mountain State Park expansion)	Farm house with lake, recreational opportunities			●		

VENUE IN FOCUS AREA	SIGNIFICANCE	THEMED ROUTES				
		Land of Rocks & Rivers	Stone Cutters	Early Settlers	Ecosystem Excursion	Spiritual Experience
NATURAL SYSTEMS FOCUS AREA (CONTINUED)						
Power of Flight Bird Habitat (part of Panola Mountain State Park)	Crane migratory preserve				●	
SPIRITUAL LANDSCAPE FOCUS AREA						
Gateway: Monastery of the Holy Spirit	Founded in 1944, Roman Catholic Monastery of the OCSO, offers prayer services, retreats, Cistercian vocation, Abbey Store, & contains an archeological, butterfly, and dragonfly collection. Over 2,000 acres of protected land including streams and wetlands.	●		●	●	●
Susong Home and Farm	Late 1940s granite home with opportunity to become nature center			●	●	
Enslaved African Cemetery	Approximately 12 graves marked by small stones			●		●
Native American Mound	Probably used as a religious site, overgrown with trees			●		●
Honey Creek	Riparian system & wetlands	●			●	
Historic Friendship Church	Remnants of foundation remain			●		●

VENUE IN FOCUS AREA	SIGNIFICANCE	THEMED ROUTES				
		Land of Rocks & Rivers	Stone Cutters	Early Settlers	Ecosystem Excursion	Spiritual Experience
VENUES OUTSIDE OF FOCUS AREAS						
Camp Smyrna	Presbyterian campground – meeting spaces surrounded by rustic cabins & recreational facilities					●
Wolf Rock	Granite outcrop	●			●	
Yellow River	Cultural, recreation, and natural resources	●				
The Mall at Stonecrest	Recreation and economic resource for residents and visitors			●		
Stone Mountain Park, located north of AMHA	3,200 acre park offering outdoor entertainment & recreation, largest mass of exposed granite		●			

HERITAGE AREA IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES



ECOS

Monastery of the Holy Spirit

The Plan's success depends on completing numerous initiatives implemented by Heritage Area stakeholders. The proposed management entity must coordinate these efforts, determine priorities, allocate funding and ensure that the goals are being attained as defined in the Plan.

The six program criteria are:

- 1. Marketing and Outreach:** Creating a unified visual identity for the Heritage Area is important to attract tourism which will have the added benefit of stimulating economic development.
- 2. Conservation and Education:** Natural, cultural and historic resources must be inventoried, understood, preserved and enhanced to make sure the Heritage Area's treasures will remain in place for future enjoyment.
- 3. Transportation and Recreation:** Recreation and ecologically sensitive transportation options will protect the diverse environment, while improving mobility and quality of life for residents and visitors.

4. Sites and Venues: Developing popular museums, nature trails and other additions that will attract new visitors is necessary to present, educate and protect Heritage Area treasures.

5. Planning and Community Development: Using the Heritage Area to preserve the quality of life for its residents will ensure its own significance and continued ability to engage public support.

6. Interpretation: Policies, programs and venues must be explained creatively and thoroughly to engage visitors of all ages. Appealing content and a variety of fun activities will encourage people to explore the Heritage Area's inspiring natural wonders and historic riches.

Chapter 5 details initiatives for each program criteria and begins to provide a thorough approach to define the broad efforts necessary for success. These initiatives enhance existing activities by key stakeholders, as well as define future opportunities. The management entity will initiate these programs and collaborate with stakeholders to engage additional support and funding. Program criteria define key initiatives that the management entity must implement to attain the Plan's goals, and will be used in the evaluation process of future program proposals in the Heritage Area.

These ideas will continue to evolve as the proposed management entity solicits proposals and works hand in hand with the community to make them happen. Once the management entity is established, these criteria can guide steering committees to review proposals, allocate funds, set priorities and assess the effectiveness of specific projects.

5.1 MARKETING AND OUTREACH

Marketing was determined as the number one priority by the steering committee. Initial resources must be used to create a compelling identity and brand. This critical step will increase visibility and become the impetus of the tourism program and promote economic development. Recommended initiatives:

- Design Arabia Mountain Heritage Area signage and logo system for consistent use on all documents and interpretive materials.
- Develop brochures and maps that highlight each Gateway and Route, geared to tourists.
- Complete a marketing and outreach plan that details action steps, sets priorities, and determines target media outlets, collaborators and funders.
- Engage local businesses to participate in marketing and education campaigns such as discounts at local shops and special events and activities along the trails.
- Assist and educate real estate developers on the Plan's goals to strengthen existing partnerships and create new collaborative opportunities and sponsorships.
- Implement an annual workshop or conference where citizens, businesses, organizations and local leaders can discuss topics of interest and find solutions to Heritage Area issues such as "smart growth," historic preservation, water quality, greenspace conservation and sustainable development.
- Expand the Heritage Area website to give updates, detailed venue information and, when possible, live video webcasts from Gateways, Focus Areas and the Route System.
- Promote the Heritage Area to regional organizations and businesses as a distinctive venue for hosting their own cultural events and annual meetings.
- Incorporate the significance of the Heritage Area in marketing materials for the jurisdictions, the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, local businesses and others.
- Develop a signature festival and other events that reflect the distinct character of the Heritage Area to increase tourism, engage visitors and raise money. Examples include road races, bicycle races, granite festival, Classic Granite Rock 'n Roll music festival, Mountain Music Bluegrass festival and African-American Heritage weekend.
- Maintain a master calendar for all fundraising and marketing activities taking place in the Heritage Area.

5.2 CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION

Education will play a powerful role in protecting the Heritage Area's future. Without it, visitors will not be aware of its precious features and the many ways to enjoy them. The idea is to offer multiple choices to invite people in and experience the magic for themselves. Only then will people realize how important it is to protect and preserve what we have. Through entertaining educational opportunities, the Heritage Area can reach its fullest potential as a gigantic, living museum, always emphasizing interactive experiences, and engaging all of the senses.

Existing education opportunities should be defined and prioritized. Recommended action steps:

- Create detailed literature on the history of the South River corridor, historic homesteads, early settlements, City of Lithonia and Arabia and Panola Mountains to be distributed at schools, businesses, Gateways and Welcome Facilities.
- Collaborate with South River community groups to improve water quality, habitat restoration, stream monitoring and land acquisition.
- Provide assistance in supporting a multi-county South River Greenway Overlay Corridor to implement development of open space regulations for its continued protection and enhancement.
- Label manholes and drainage inlets to raise awareness of the detrimental effects of pollution down stream in lakes and waterways.
- Obtain grants to offer educational and cultural activities for children and adults.
- Expand the Heritage Area's website to include in-depth information on topics such as Native American communities, historic African-American settlements, the role of granite and distinctive plants and animals, and other topics of interest.
- Train a corps of volunteers to effectively present the stories and history, and lead guided tours at Gateways and Welcome Facilities.
- Engage metro-Atlanta schools in learning the Heritage Area's vibrant stories in after-school programs, field trips and custom-designed Heritage Area and environmental curriculums.
- Support continuing education classes for adults that use Heritage Area venues as outdoor classrooms for bird watching, native plants and wildlife studies, and historic preservation.
- Promote college and university programs that feature the Heritage Area for case studies and lectures, classroom activities and thesis projects, to complete additional research needed on many intriguing topics that can be studied here. Offer internships in various specialties.
- Assist citizens, businesses and local leaders with advice, education and literature on the negative impacts of unplanned growth on the Heritage Area's future.
- Develop an educational treasure hunt for children. Local businesses can sponsor a different hunt each month. Kids with completed treasure hunts might receive prizes or discounts from local merchants.
- Collaborate with other metro-Atlanta attractions to offer natural, historic and cultural tours for members or visitors of Fernbank Museum of Natural History, Atlanta Botanical Garden, High Museum of Art, Atlanta History Center, DeKalb Historical Society and Stone Mountain Park.
- Create a research center where visitors can explore in-depth aspects of the Heritage Area's history, early cultures and significant events.
- Provide technical assistance for restoring and reusing historic buildings.
- Assist in renovating defined cultural landscapes for future interpretation and education.
- Provide technical assistance for conservation efforts by others that meet the Plan's goals.
- Increase public involvement with the Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE) and similar non-profits.
- Promote the completion of the future DeKalb County environmental public high school. This groundbreaking project could become a role model around the country. The actual building, as well as the curriculum, will actively engage students in environmental studies with an

emphasis on connections to the Heritage Area's natural treasures. The site is adjacent to greenspace at Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve and is connected to the PATH trail, offering countless opportunities for students, faculty and the public to experience nature's lessons first hand.

5.3 TRANSPORTATION AND RECREATION

A themed Route System is illustrated in the Plan to encourage visitors to move through the entire Heritage Area. Consistently, the community passionately requested this popular feature, knowing full well the power of personally experiencing the wonders the Heritage Area can offer.

A tremendous asset, already in place and expanding is the multi-use trail system, with plans to extend it for many more miles. Other means for visiting and experiencing the Heritage Area first-hand must be encouraged and readily available. Recommended initiatives include:

- Design and implement a seamlessly integrated driving, walking and water Route System.
- Explore and provide assistance to implement additional transportation options such as bike and canoe rentals and electric or hybrid shuttles between Gateways, as well as special rental cars at the Mall of Stonecrest.
- Initiate the process with Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to obtain Scenic Byway designation for the Evans Mill-Browns Mill-Klondike Road corridors.
- Discuss options to improve and streamline access to the Heritage Area from downtown Atlanta hotels and convention centers by MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority).
- Explore the possibility of creating a transportation management association (TMA), or something similar, to provide alternative transportation options and incentives for carpools, vanpools and other choices to driving.
- Support businesses that offer outdoor recreation activities such as canoeing, bicycling, bird watching, running, skating, horse back riding and roller blading.

- Continue marketing the multi-use trail system, and encouraging connections by stakeholders to Welcome Facilities and Gateways.
- Install wayfinding signage for easy navigation between Focus Areas, Gateways and businesses, by car and on foot.
- Encourage continued acquisition of greenspace by all public stakeholders to continue to expand recreation opportunities.
- Develop boat tours along the South River with designated launching areas.
- Support hiking programs and nature walks for groups and families.
- Assist in locating and creating controlled camping locations.

5.4 SITES AND VENUES

The Heritage Area is a marvelous, 40,000-acre collection of awe-inspiring natural wonders and historic treasures, just waiting to be explored by new audiences. In highlighting its distinctive sites and venues, visitors will begin to understand and appreciate why this can become prized ground to future generations. Recommended action steps:

- Assist with design, construction and maintenance of a Visitors Center at Vaughters' Farm, the primary Gateway.
- Collaborate, design, construct, staff and maintain the other four Gateways.
- Assist with design and maintenance of selected venues identified as interpretation opportunities within each Focus Area.
- Support the creation of a granite and quarrying museum in the City of Lithonia.
- Support additional access points to the South River.
- Provide assistance in preserving, renovating and revitalizing the City of Lithonia with emphasis on granite facades, Main Street and other prominent streetscapes.
- Support Panola Mountain State Park and Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve to provide first-class exhibits that pique visitor curiosity about natural, historic and cultural legacies.

5.5 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

To realize the Plan's goals, future initiatives must weigh the importance of sustaining a high quality of life for Heritage Area residents and visitors. Recommended community development initiatives include:

- Continue to collaborate with local businesses and large institutions such as Mall at Stonecrest and New Birth Church (25,000 members) to achieve the Plan's goals.
- Assist communities and landowners in achieving National Register of Historic Places designation, and complete other historic surveys.
- Assist Heritage Area communities in creating supportive zoning that directs growth to locations that are not environmentally sensitive or historically significant.
- Assist in organizing a bed & breakfast network to promote tourism and nurture local economic development.

5.6 INTERPRETATION

Policies, programs and venues must be explained effectively, creatively and thoroughly to engage visitors of all ages. Interpretation will focus on appealing content and a variety of fun ways to teach visitors about the inspiring natural wonders and historic treasures, waiting to be explored.

Recommended action steps:

- Establish hands-on, entertaining exhibits at all Gateways and Welcome Facilities.
- Assist with the visitor experience at Gateways by providing beautifully produced brochures and maps, and well-trained volunteers.
- Create a coordinated, environmental graphics system. Install directional and educational signs at key interpretive sites and along the Route System.
- Prepare and distribute an audio driving and walking tour, available as a free download from the Internet.
- Develop exhibits, maps and brochures for other sites identified in the Plan including parking

areas, local businesses and venues operated by others.

- Offer themed tours, both guided and self-guided, throughout the Heritage Area using trained volunteers.
- Encourage communities, organizations and citizens to record oral histories. Incorporate these personal stories in videos and DVDs at Welcome Facilities and even on websites.

CHAPTER 6:

HERITAGE AREA MANAGEMENT

Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance



School children spend the day at Arabia Mountain

In eight short years, the accomplishments and influence of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance ('Arabia Alliance') are impressive. Superseding an earlier group known as the Friends of Arabia, this highly effective non-profit organization has grown to be the premier force for protecting Arabia Mountain, as well as spearheading efforts to create the larger Arabia Mountain Heritage Area.

Since 1998, the Arabia Alliance has been the primary entity overseeing the dream of a Heritage Area and its protection. The group enjoys an impressive reputation and accomplished track record. As an all-volunteer organization, with no salaries paid, the Arabia Alliance's expenses are divided as follows:

65% for Planning and Community Development

Initiatives include actively seeking National Heritage Area designation from Congress, actively seeking designation on the National Register of Historic Places for Klondike and Lithonia, greenspace planning, cemetery preservation, extending the multi-use trail to increase connectivity, offering special events and promotions, and hosting retreats for environmental groups and other non-profits.

20% for Conservation and Education

Initiatives include producing and distributing the Arabia Alliance promotional video for middle school and high school students, developing signage and kiosks at the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, sponsoring field trips for teachers and students of all ages including universities, maintaining the only website, www.arabiaalliance.org, and producing and archiving videos of Heritage Area meetings, dedications, special events and interviews with community elders

and political leaders.

10% for Marketing and Outreach

Initiatives include producing Heritage Area displays at the Mall at Stonecrest, updating the Arabia Alliance website with maps and calendars of events, producing and distributing a Heritage Area wall calendar, and cooperating with local and regional media and the DeKalb County Visitors Bureau.

5% for Sites and Venues

The Arabia Alliance maintains and operates the Lithonia Woman's Club. They coordinated the relocation of the historic Ragsdale home and work closely with private owners and the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation to protect other historic homes. The Arabia Alliance organizes many community meetings, and family and school reunions at the Lithonia Woman's Club which increase loyalty and appreciation of the Heritage Area.

Based on these successes and many others, The Plan recommends that the Arabia Alliance remain the name of the management entity for the Heritage Area, yet the mission and composition must be restructured.

Initially, Arabia Alliance's priority was to preserve the "view shed" from the top of Arabia Mountain,

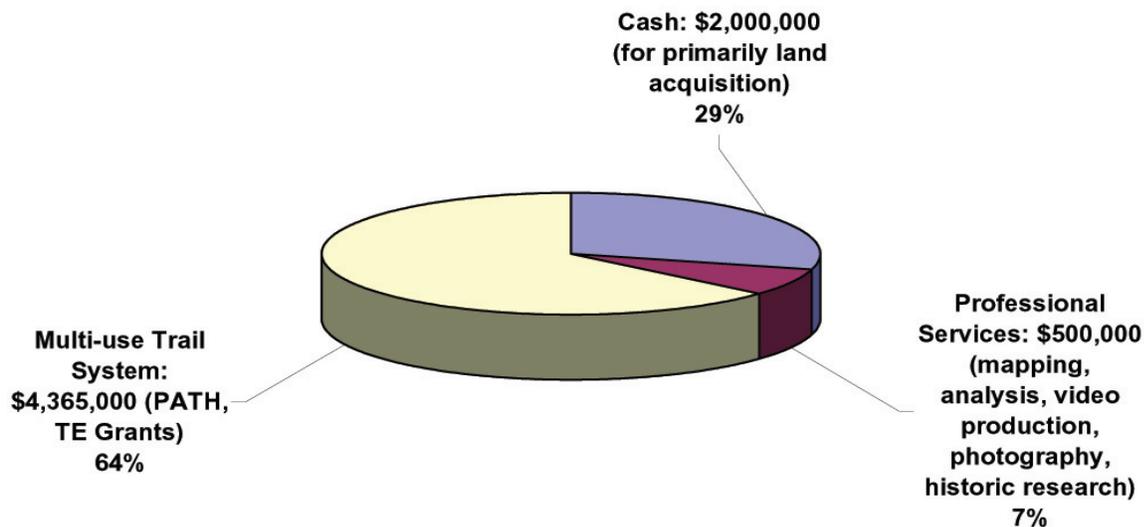


Figure 6.1: Project Donations (Excluding Land Donated) as of March 1, 2006

and the group was instrumental in protecting 535 acres that make up the original core of the Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve. Their focus has grown to encompass the entire 64-square mile Heritage Area and today, the Arabia Alliance and its many partners oversee and assist in protecting 4052 acres.

With residential and commercial growth sprawling toward the Heritage Area at a rapid pace, the all-volunteer leadership of the Arabia Alliance recognized that success was only possible through collaboration. Before the Arabia Alliance took the big picture view, there was no system in place for three counties and other jurisdictions to work together and pool precious resources to plan for the Heritage Area's long term future. By bringing all of the stakeholders to the same table and benefiting from each partners' strengths, expertise and financial support, tremendous progress

continues to be made. The Arabia Alliance has brought all of the stakeholders together to determine which areas should be included within the Heritage Area boundary, always emphasizing the benefits of connectivity and opportunities to spotlight cultural, historic and natural legacies.

In addition to forging strong relationships with the jurisdictions, the Arabia Alliance partnered with national environmental organizations such as The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, the Trust for Public Land and others to channel additional resources. The Arabia Alliance does not actually buy or own property, yet its counsel has been invaluable in assisting these and other partners to obtain public and private funding to acquire and protect valuable greenspace.

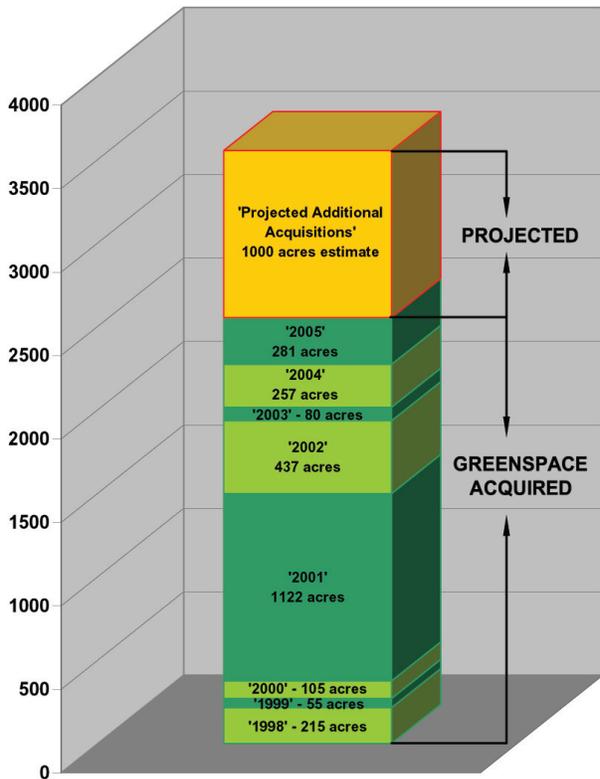


Figure 6.2: Greenspace Acquired, 1998-2005

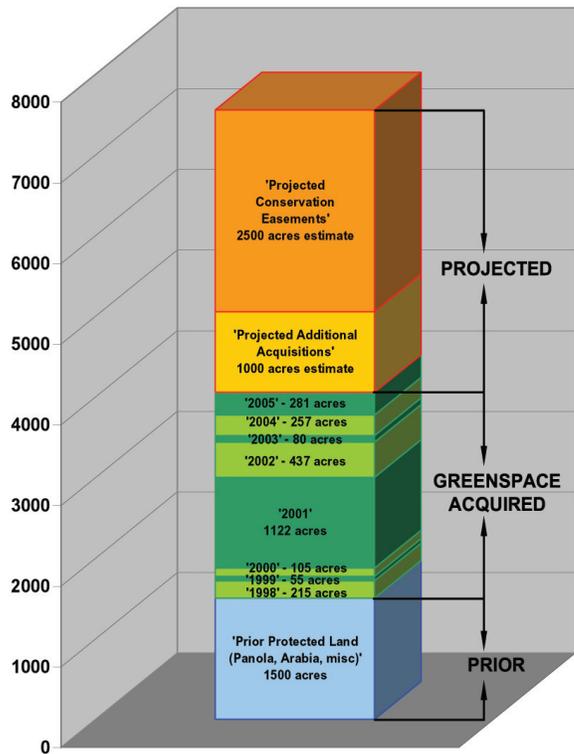


Figure 6.3: Greenspace Protected, 1969-2005

The Arabia Alliance's circle of partners has expanded to include the DeKalb County Board of Education, PATH Foundation and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. These collaborative relationships spawned several innovative initiatives including the plan for an environmental public high school campus at Arabia Mountain, a multi-use trail system connecting the entire Heritage Area, and re-envisioning the entire 2,000 plus-acre Monastery as an environmental preserve.

Despite the Arabia Alliance's success as an effective steward, its current management structure cannot successfully meet the Plan's goals given its limited size and lack of resources. The steering committee determined that restructuring the non-profit entity, rather than completely dissolving it, is the best approach to move forward. A newly structured Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance can efficiently implement preservation programs, match and distribute federal and local monies, influence and encourage others to implement the Plan and secure additional funds.

The Arabia Alliance must continue to work closely with its stakeholders, especially the jurisdictions and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, for assistance and guidance, benefiting from each organization's understanding of best management practices to protect historic, natural and cultural capital. This chapter outlines the functions of the restructured management entity and offers recommendations for the roles of each stakeholder.

6.1 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Arabia Alliance is a model for bringing representatives from government agencies and communities together with environmental groups and others to create an effective alliance in the truest sense of the word. Arabia Alliance's strength lies in its belief that it is better to coordinate, not duplicate. The group has played a vital role in maximizing the strengths and assets of others, demonstrating that great things can happen through vision and collaboration.

This approach should remain in place, keeping Arabia Alliance's staff as small as possible. Their efforts should continue to focus on assisting larger organizations spend their own resources wisely and effectively, rather than creating one more layer of staffing.

Successful relationships garnered by the Arabia Alliance in the past are essential for implementing the Plan's initiatives in the future. This continued involvement will bring credibility and preserve continuity that donors expect. The recommended restructured non-profit 501-c(3) entity requires a board of directors, a non-voting advisory committee and minimal staff. The **board of directors** should include representatives from all stakeholders in the Heritage Area, modeled after the successful steering committee used in the planning process to include the five jurisdictions, local communities (Klondike, Evans Mill, Flat Rock and South Rockdale), local businesses (such as the Mall at Stonecrest and major quarry companies) and the Arabia Alliance.

A **non-voting advisory committee** should include other organizations and businesses whose directives complement the Heritage Area's mission, such as The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land. A small, yet effective **staff** will be needed for day-to-day operations of the restructured entity, and should include an Executive Director with two or three assistants or interns. The board of directors and the non-voting advisory committee should be actively engaged to provide expertise. To accomplish initiatives that require design or management abilities that the board or advisory committee cannot provide, the entity may seek proposals from others, or hire private consultants for tasks such as developing marketing materials and designing Gateways. By allowing the entity to act as a non-profit, public-private partnership, the Arabia Alliance's capacities will greatly increase at a minimal cost, and the Plan's goals will be achieved.

Further, the Plan recommends that the Arabia Alliance enter into a **cooperative agreement** with

the jurisdictions and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. This agreement is essentially an endorsement to support policies and initiatives necessary to attain the Plan's goals, provide technical and financial assistance, engage in planning the proposed Gateway venues and Welcome Facilities, provide operational support and assist with daily operations and management activities on property owned by each stakeholder.

The restructured Arabia Alliance will initiate steps to interpret the Gateways and other venues. The Arabia Alliance may not be involved in actually operating venues and Gateways, yet should support and promote the continued efforts of others. The Arabia Alliance can fill many roles including marketing, reviewing proposals by others seeking funds for initiatives that advance the Plan's goals, providing assistance to stakeholders, acquiring additional funds, and collecting and distributing federal dollars to other groups. The Arabia Alliance should solicit proposals that will advance these efforts and bring in new revenue. Other responsibilities can include providing technical and financial assistance, and developing programs that promote and protect the Heritage Area's splendid potential.

6.2 MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

The new Arabia Alliance must prioritize its resources to meet the requirements to become a National Heritage Area in accordance with the requirements of the U.S. Department of Interior (National Park Service).

By directing funds to advance the Heritage Area's mission and goals, the Arabia Alliance has a powerful opportunity. They can set the bar for other organizations to make the most of non-profit, public-private partnerships to manage a large area of land as an outdoor museum, spanning several jurisdictions.

Interpretation

Strong partnerships are already in place with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and

many others. The Arabia Alliance will continue to join forces and pool resources to produce a coordinated signage system, top quality visitor facilities and train knowledgeable staff to interpret the significance of the Heritage Area's treasures, bringing its past and present to life.

The Arabia Alliance will coordinate ongoing and future education initiatives and seek innovative approaches. Examples include:

- Solicit artists to provide creative solutions to educate and entertain visitors, young and old.
- Involve school children and area youth to create interactive, 'edu-tainment' opportunities at the Gateways. – Create downloadable audio tours on various themes, to be played while driving, biking or walking.

Sites and Venues

Protection and ongoing maintenance of specific sites will be critical, requiring collaboration and innovative strategies between the Arabia Alliance and its partners. Examples include:

- Involving local governments and private owners to provide access to potential venues for interpretation.
- Encouraging partners to maintain venues and landscapes.
- Encouraging new land purchases to preserve new and existing landscapes and sites for interpretation.

Conservation and Education

The Arabia Alliance will play an active role in developing and promoting educational activities that will make the Heritage Area a favorite destination for locals and tourists, young and old, rich and poor.

As a bridge builder to increase public awareness, the Arabia Alliance can work together with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Boards of Education in DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties, community groups such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Audubon Society and garden clubs to develop relevant teaching tools and interactive programs.

Protecting land and open greenspace is another important role for the Arabia Alliance, yet owning land should not be a function of the entity itself. Therefore, the Arabia Alliance can provide their expertise to others to continue to protect greenspace and natural resources. Examples include:

- Partnering with a diverse array of educational institutions to expand and enhance learning opportunities.
- Supporting greenspace initiatives offered by the State and the counties, as well as private conservation groups.
- Promoting the Heritage Area as an outdoor classroom for higher learning and other research.
- Encouraging sustainable and "smart growth" practices in all endeavors. For example, support the creation of an overlay environmental district for the Heritage Area.
- Focusing on "leading edge" environmentally sensitive solutions in all endeavors.

Planning and Community Development

To increase tourism and economic development, the Arabia Alliance must partner with the State, the jurisdictions and local businesses. Examples include:

- Helping to establish a granite and quarry museum in the City of Lithonia.
- Promoting the creation of a Heritage Area Review Board to establish specific guidelines and development regulations. The Review Board would assess and comment on new residential and commercial projects that have a direct impact on the long-term health and character of the Heritage Area.
- Sponsoring annual forums and workshops to discuss Heritage Area growth issues, solutions and success stories.
- Encouraging involvement from local businesses to increase tourism and marketability of Heritage Area attractions. Establishing unified promotional themes, cohesive materials and incentives that will entice new audiences.

Transportation and Recreation

Currently, the Arabia Alliance collaborates with PATH Foundation on route selection and construction of the multi-use trail, eventually extending it throughout the entire Heritage Area. Other entities, such as DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties and especially GA DNR, can also partner with the Arabia Alliance to determine the best approach for expanding recreation and transportation opportunities, always reinforcing the Plan's goals. Examples include:

- Encourage counties to incorporate multi-use trails in development codes for future residential, retail and office projects to expand the walking Route System into new parts of the Heritage Area.
- Encourage environmentally sensitive transportation between Focus Areas and Gateways such as clean-fuel shuttle buses, walking, biking, canoeing and horse back riding.
- Support the development of a water Route System and associated facilities along the South River as illustrated in the Plan.

6.3 COLLABORATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The size of the Heritage Area spanning several jurisdictions, and the diversity, quality and quantity of its assets demands meaningful collaboration. The Arabia Alliance should continue to work as a team with public, non-profit and private organizations to tap into additional talent and funding sources that will broaden its reach.

The Jurisdictions

State of Georgia

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources

(GA DNR) State Parks and Historic Sites division manages Panola Mountain State Park, a precious gem in Rockdale County. Staff members of this division have been integral in the planning process. Their expertise and insight on how resources can be managed efficiently have been invaluable. GA DNR owns and maintains two of the proposed Gateway sites -- Panola Mountain State Park

(Natural Systems Gateway) and Vaughters' Farm (Culture and Community Gateway and proposed Visitors Center). GA DNR recently acquired the Parker homestead, the oldest home in Rockdale County, and surrounding property along the South River (the former Southernness Golf Club). This parcel complements their recent purchase of the neighboring Alexander estate. GA DNR is currently engaged in updating its master plan for Panola Mountain State Park and an expanded Vaughters' Farm. That effort continues to be coordinated with this planning process. In addition, GA DNR is pursuing the acquisition of several hundred acres to further expand Panola.

Because of their strong presence and investment at Panola Mountain, GA DNR has provided expertise to the Arabia Alliance in selecting potential land acquisitions, cost analysis, wildlife and environmental assessment assistance and general guidance on effective preservation efforts. This Plan recommends that the future role of GA DNR include researching and documenting cultural and natural resources, assisting in restoration, construction, maintenance and operation of the five Gateways, expertise in educational materials and interactive exhibits, assisting with tours, creating outdoor classrooms, and being involved with daily venue operations and maintenance at sites either owned or managed by GA DNR.

Because of the organization's strong track record in managing large land areas, coupled with its substantial investment in the Heritage Area, the Plan recommends that GA DNR discuss with the other partners and the Arabia Alliance the possibility of managing, under contract, day-to-day maintenance and staffing issues for the entire Heritage Area. Currently, GA DNR receives funding to staff and manage venues, providing an outstanding opportunity to coordinate educational exhibits at the proposed Gateways and Welcome Facilities.

DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry Counties

The counties are also dedicated allies of the Heritage Area. They have provided financial support to the Arabia Alliance's work, as well as

serving as valued members of the Plan's steering committee. Funding for this Plan was provided by DeKalb County, Turner Foundation, Rockdale County, GA DNR, the Arabia Alliance and private donors.

Their financial involvement remains critical for the Arabia Alliance to receive federal funding that requires matches from local sources. The jurisdictions should play a significant role in directing preservation efforts, educating their citizens and encouraging continued conservation through balanced, environmentally sensitive land use and regulations.

The Arabia Alliance rely on DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties for their continued support to acquire additional greenspace to protect wildlife habitats and potential locations for the proposed walking Route System.

DeKalb County has been a major supporter of the Heritage Area's creation and protection. Supporting the Arabia Alliance as the official steward of Arabia Mountain, DeKalb County has dedicated funding, staffing and technical expertise in land preservation, and trail design and construction.

DeKalb County through its **Parks and Recreation** and **GIS departments** has committed significant technical assistance to the Arabia Alliance. They have provided Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data and assigned a liaison to this planning process. The DeKalb County Parks Department also provides full-time rangers at the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve.

DeKalb County has led the way, through its nationally recognized Parks and Greenspace Bond program, in purchasing nearly 2,000 acres of additional greenspace in the Heritage Area in the last few years, with more to come.

DeKalb County's continued support is crucial for realizing the dreams recommended in this Plan. Creating the Route System will require leadership and funding, and the proposed Early Settlement

Focus Area Gateway at Lyon's Farm and homestead will require design and planning, construction, interpretation and maintenance.

DeKalb County Board of Education is involved in planning the proposed environmental high school campus, which will surely be a model for future high schools statewide. In addition, the Board of Education provided partial funding to the Arabia Alliance to produce an educational video on Arabia Mountain for distribution to all public high schools. This video has significantly increased awareness and appreciation of the Heritage Area and its ecological wonders throughout the community, especially with students.

Committed individuals from other DeKalb County organizations such as the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Historical Society have donated their time and talent to complete the Feasibility Study and this Management Plan, and will remain engaged now and in the future. DeKalb County had three liaisons as members of the Plan's steering committee.

Rockdale County whole-heartedly embraces the preservation of open space and has implemented "smart growth" land use regulations that promote clustering homes together to increase open space in residential developments. Rockdale County is collaborating with the PATH Foundation and the Arabia Alliance to acquire land to extend the multi-use trail through Rockdale.

Rockdale County recently completed the Stonecrest Area Study to effectively plan and manage future growth surrounding the Mall at Stonecrest with emphasis on preserving greenspace, protecting community character and promoting a livable, walkable environment, requiring that new developments connect to the PATH system.

Rockdale County Parks and Recreation department manages South Rockdale Community Park and the DeCastro estate, and provides Geographic Information Systems data. Two

Rockdale County liaisons were members of the Plan's steering committee.

Henry County is also actively involved in planning future greenspace acquisitions. Henry County District Commissioner, Planning and Greenspace department staff and the Board of Commissioners are strong supporters of the Arabia Alliance's efforts. Recently, Henry County purchased the Wolf Rock area with limited State greenspace funds. The site is contiguous to Panola Mountain State Park and important for the rare plants that grow on the granite outcrops there. By protecting this site, Henry County has formed a tangible link to the rest of the Heritage Area's greenspace.

City of Lithonia completed an Atlanta Regional Commission Livable Centers Initiative planning project in 2003 that promotes economic development and an improved quality of life for its residents. Lithonia's efforts reinforce the Plan's goals for the City, and supports the proposed Gateway and granite museum there. Lithonia's leadership must support the Gateway facility at the Lithonia Woman's Club through marketing, wayfinding signs and visitor conveniences such as parking, additional streetscape improvements and water and sewer.

The Focus Area for Granite Industry and Technology exists within Lithonia. Cooperative efforts to promote these attractions will be valuable. The Mayor of Lithonia and city council members have provided their time and dedication as steering committee members for this Plan.

Summary

Highlights of partnership opportunities for the State, the counties and Lithonia include:

- Participating in the creation of a Heritage Area identity package. Once new marketing messages are complete, they will be shared with the jurisdictions to be incorporated into their own marketing and tourism initiatives for use on websites, in brochures, maps and public events.
- Designing, building and operating the

Gateways.

- Helping design, build and maintain the walking and waterway systems.
- Implementing land use regulations to preserve greenspace and promote sustainable growth.
- Creating Heritage Area overlay districts, conservation subdivision ordinances and transfer of development rights ordinances.
- Continuing to acquire greenspace to expand protected land throughout the Heritage Area.
- Requiring connectivity features such as trails and open space in zoning regulations for future developments.
- Continuing collaboration between the counties and the Arabia Alliance on transportation, land use planning, parks, public works and GIS data.
- Helping fund the Arabia Alliance's work.

Additional Public Partners

The **State of Georgia** offers several initiatives that will benefit the Heritage Area. For example, The Georgia Land Conservation Act recently established a \$100 million fund for counties, cities and the GA DNR to promote land conservation. Agencies are encouraged to partner with 501-c(3) organizations to receive the funding to develop land conservation projects, as well as buy land and conservation easements. The initiative can pay private property owners to place conservation easements on their land, providing an additional resource for protecting greenspace in the Heritage Area. The timing is ideal for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Alliance to set the standard for maximizing State funds and take full advantage of the benefits offered by the Georgia Land Conservation Act.

A fine example is the recent contract to purchase the Susong property and home by the Monastery of the Holy Spirit. This Plan recommends that the Susong home become the Welcome Facility for the Spiritual Landscape Focus Area. The Monastery is actively working with several organizations and local agencies to determine the best approach to raise funds to acquire and preserve the 275-acre parcel along the South River located in the heart of the Monastery.

The State of Georgia is encouraged to continue to acquire greenspace and conservation easements to protect land and historic sites within the Heritage Area. In addition, the State can also be instrumental in promoting the Heritage Area in their own marketing and tourism initiatives such as websites, brochures and maps at welcome centers and rest areas along the interstate.

The **Georgia Department of Transportation** (GDOT) provides assistance to the Heritage Area in many ways. Recently, GDOT advanced the Plan's goal of protecting land by acquiring greenspace along the South River as mitigation for nearby transportation improvements. GDOT is working with PATH Foundation to extend the multi-use trail along State Highway 212 (Browns Mill Road). This section is crucial to connect Arabia to Panola Mountain. Future initiatives can include assistance in securing Scenic Byway designation for the Evans Mill-Browns Mill-Klondike Scenic Byway, coordinating transportation improvements to ensure that they complement the Plan, collaborating with Gateway locations, streetscape improvements, and route access and design. GDOT can also provide support by permitting trail construction along road rights-of-ways, and financial assistance for these projects through Transportation Enhancement (TE) funding.

As GDOT continues to secure land for mitigation purposes, required by ongoing road expansion throughout metro-Atlanta, GDOT should continue to work in concert with the Arabia Alliance to acquire sensitive landscapes, especially sites along the South River. A coordinated approach will better protect water quality and increase precious greenspace.

United States government

The **National Park Service** (NPS) **Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program** (RTCA) provides technical support to the Arabia Alliance. NPS RTCA staff should remain actively involved by continuing to provide their expertise to restore historic sites and structures, and create educational exhibits. In addition, NPS RTCA can assist with venue-specific maintenance, where possible, as well

as design and construction of walking and waterway routes. NPS can cross-promote Heritage Area attractions in their own marketing materials and public facilities.

Private and Non-Profit Partners

The monks of the **Monastery of the Holy Spirit**, in the southern tip of the Heritage Area, have cultivated and inhabited their gorgeous property for over 60 years. Their presence offers a rare opportunity to witness the 1,000-year-old lifestyle of the Trappist Order, one that is dedicated to a life of work, contemplation and solitude. Previously numbering over 100, today, they are a community of less than 50 monks spanning several generations. Formerly farmers, the monks now support the Monastery through their guest house, donations, stained glass window production, bonsai trees sales and gift shop items. The Monastery gift shop attracts more than 50,000 visitors annually, and is already the number one tourist destination in Rockdale County.

Monastery leaders fully support the need to protect and increase open space in the Heritage Area, and are proactively seeking techniques to ensure that appropriate portions of their land are permanently protected from development. A master plan of their 2,000 plus-acre property was recently completed and calls for protecting wetlands and waterways, Native American and African-American artifacts, historic religious structures and wildlife habitats.

The Monastery monks are faithful and dedicated land stewards and have generously supported the Heritage Area by reserving the Susong property for a proposed nature center and Gateway. The nature center will highlight their captivating collection of 88 species of butterflies, 48 species of dragonflies and other insects found on the property, which speaks to one facet of nature's abundant diversity in one place. In addition, exhibits on the Japanese art of bonsai trees, meditation, timbering and wetland preservation can be offered.

Another highlight of the Spiritual Landscape

Gateway at the Monastery will feature the monks' vast collection of Native American artifacts featuring priceless arrowheads, pottery shards and other objects, some dating back 10,000 years. Continuing to cultivate an open and supportive partnership between the Monastery and the Arabia Alliance will yield rich benefits and go a long way toward meeting the Plan's goals.

The Arabia Alliance can partner with the Monastery on marketing and promotional efforts, and in designing, building and operating the Spiritual Landscape Gateway.

Local businesses can also join the effort. Increased tourism will boost demand for shopping, dining, overnight stays, hiking, biking, canoeing and other sightseeing opportunities. In the recently completed Tourism Report (See Appendix H), an estimated 25,000 visitors every year are expected within the next five years. Businesses in the Heritage Area, such as the Mall at Stonecrest, have provided support during this planning process, and are dedicated to preserving resources to encourage future tourism. Partnership efforts must focus on programs that can strengthen tourism potential while effectively protecting delicate natural areas.

Efforts to design and build walking trails and secure conservation easements that connect businesses to Heritage Area venues will be encouraged, as well as offering promotional packages with discounts on lodging, dining and car rental. Additional tourism initiatives are detailed in the Tourism Report.

The Arabia Alliance will seek expertise, staffing and funding from **philanthropic organizations** and individual donors with similar interests and philosophies. Protecting open space, preserving history, and creating entertaining educational offerings are examples of common interests shared by The Conservation Fund, the Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy and many foundations.

Community organizations, such as the Klondike Area Civic Association and the Flat Rock Archive

Stakeholder	Program Criteria					
	Marketing & Outreach	Sites & Venues	Conservation & Education	Transportation & Recreation	Planning & Community Development	Interpretation
Public Stakeholders						
DeKalb County	•	•	•	•		•
Rockdale County	•	•	•	•		•
Henry County	•	•	•	•		•
City of Lithonia	•	•	•	•		•
State of Georgia	•	•	•	•	•	•
National Park Service (RTCA)	•		•		•	•
GDOT	•			•		
Private & Non-Profit Stakeholders						
Monastery of the Holy Spirit	•	•	•			•
Heritage Area Businesses	•				•	•
Philanthropic Organizations		•	•		•	•
Community Organizations	•	•	•			•
PATH Foundation	•			•		•

Figure 6.3: Recommended Stakeholder Collaboration

are also strong supporters of the Plan and served as steering committee members. In part, because they are committed to historic preservation and documentation, the Klondike community recently received notice that it qualifies for designation on the National Register of Historic Places. Members of the Flat Rock community, home to one of the oldest African-American cemeteries in Georgia, have provided design and planning input during this process.

These community organizations will be encouraged to provide research on undocumented parts of the Heritage Area's history for educational displays and

marketing materials, and to remain vigilant in renovating historic structures and cemeteries.

PATH Foundation is dedicated to developing a first class system of interlinking greenway trails throughout Atlanta and Georgia. Their team of experienced trail builders has had phenomenal success in completing more than 90 miles of trails so far around the state. As of 2005, eight miles of paved trails have been completed in the Heritage Area. The trail meanders through forests, fields, over streams, by waterfalls, through boulders and across wetland boardwalks. As Georgia's expert in building mixed-use trails, PATH Foundation plays

an integral role in attracting financial support from the counties, private foundations and individuals, businesses and federal funding from GDOT Transportation Enhancement grants. Walking and biking trails are the backbone of the Plan's Route System, and have given new life to the community by connecting destinations, and promoting a new, healthy way to experience the Heritage Area. Many miles of trails are planned and designed, and will extend to the City of Atlanta, Stone Mountain and the Monastery. PATH has completed a major segment of the system that provides a north-south connection linking Lithonia, the Mall at Stonecrest, Vaughters' Farm and the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve to Panola Mountain. The next leg will extend to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit and northeast to MLK High School along the South River. All proposed routes complement the illustrated routes in the Plan, and will connect visitors directly to the Gateways.

The proposed system has already received over \$3.3 million from DeKalb County, \$1.7 million from PATH Foundation and an additional \$1.1 million in Transportation Enhancement monies and other federal funds. DeKalb County recently passed a Parks Bond referendum that allocates an additional \$3 million for PATH, focused on the Heritage Area. There are many potential funding sources to extend the trail into Rockdale County such as monies from the roads and parks and recreation sections of the 2004 Rockdale SPLOST program, Transportation Enhancement funding, potential funding earmarked from Congress, the proposed impact fees and the general fund. PATH includes a maintenance endowment for most sections of the trails they build in the Heritage Area to ensure they remain a community asset, not a liability in the future. Additional funding support is anticipated from Henry County and GA DNR to implement future sections of the multi-use trail as defined in the Plan.

Once cohesive marketing materials are developed by the Arabia Alliance, PATH can become another important partner to incorporate them in their own public relations efforts and spread the word to new audiences and outdoor enthusiasts.

6.4 FIRST PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA ALLIANCE

All stakeholders should approve the guidelines to establish the new Arabia Alliance. It is recommended that the jurisdictions approve and implement the Plan and its recommendations, especially participating in the newly restructured Arabia Alliance, so the Plan can become a blueprint for future initiatives statewide. To meet the Plan's goals, the restructured Arabia Alliance must engage in the following process to increase its capacity and influence.

1. Create a cooperative agreement.

The steering committee for this process has endorsed the Plan and creation of the new Arabia Alliance. By endorsing the Plan, the stakeholders show their support to cooperatively implement the Plan.

2. Create a board of directors and a non-voting advisory committee.

The new board will consist of representatives from the key stakeholders, using the planning steering committee as a model. Recommended board members include representatives from GA DNR, DeKalb County, Rockdale County, Henry County, City of Lithonia, Arabia Alliance, community members and local businesses.

The non-voting advisory committee will provide technical expertise and talent, staffing and research. Recommended members include, yet are not limited to, representatives from each counties' historical society and visitors bureau, conservation organizations, State Historic Preservation Division, each counties' Board of Education, National Park Service, PATH Foundation and other relevant public departments.

3. Define a mission statement and by-laws.

Every non-profit organization must have a mandate to direct its efforts and guide its actions. The new Arabia Alliance will collaborate with its stakeholders to define its mission, establish by-laws and allocate resources for achieving the Plan's goals.

4. Assemble staff.

With the completion of the Plan, the new Arabia Alliance must select and hire an Executive Director to guide the organization, initiate priority action steps approved by key stakeholders, engage in fundraising and partnership building and carry out the requests of the board of directors. A limited staff of two or three people, and possibly interns and qualified volunteers, will provide day-to-day assistance.

5. Develop agreements with the jurisdictions to define roles and resources.

To initiate the Plan's strategies, the new Arabia Alliance can recommend which services each jurisdiction can provide. Future agreements between the jurisdictions and the Arabia Alliance can define responsibilities and duration. Services provided by each can be determined based on short and long term needs and resources.

6. Seek proposals.

The new Arabia Alliance will seek proposals and promote initiatives by others to advance the Plan's goals. The Arabia Alliance will also set priorities and allocate funds. Once complete, each project must be evaluated for cost efficiencies and merit in achieving the Plan's goals.

When receiving technical or financial requests or proposals from groups who wish to promote Heritage Area goals, the Arabia Alliance should refer to these criteria as guidelines to determine their involvement and support:

Does this effort preserve a specific place that can be viewed or visited?

Does this effort protect a natural resource?

Does it promote economic development in a sustainable way?

Does it improve a visitor's understanding and appreciation of the Heritage Area's significance?

Does this effort encourage educational opportunities?

Does it promote tourism and having fun?

Does it encourage connectivity to other venues in the Heritage Area or the region?

Will the project require financial or technical support over time? If so, what are the implications and who will need to be involved?

CHAPTER 7:

HERITAGE AREA COST & PHASING



Kathryn Kolb

Vernal pool on Davidson-Arabia Mountain
Nature Preserve

The Plan outlines an ambitious, long-term strategy. Funding the Plan's initiatives will involve many partners, always being mindful of ways to maximize and pool sources for the greatest positive impact.

With adoption of the Plan by the partners, costs to operate the Heritage Area will rise. The restructured Arabia Alliance must provide assistance, training and programming services to its current and future partners.

These services are defined as Operational Costs and include planning and design input, retaining consultants to handle projects that fall outside of the stakeholders' expertise, and assisting partner groups advancing the Plan's goals. The Arabia Alliance must attract matching funds from its stakeholders to implement bricks and mortar initiatives detailed in Chapter 5. These expenses are defined as Capital Costs and include signage, venue improvements and marketing materials.

Sources of Operational and Capital Costs are listed in this section. They assume an estimated \$1 million allocation each year in federal funds through the National Heritage Area program, with a 1 to 2 match from the Arabia Alliance's partners. Costs do not include any annual operating expenses of the Arabia Alliance. (See Figure 7.1)

7.1 FUNDING SOURCES

While the Arabia Alliance works diligently to protect the Heritage Area's natural legacies and promote environmental stewardship in the next generation, it can also be a catalyst for improving the economic climate there. The Arabia Alliance can provide valuable technical and financial assistance to preserve and enhance cultural and historic sites and structures. The Arabia Alliance must pursue traditional and innovative ways to secure matching funds to receive federal dollars, garner support from private entities, philanthropic organizations and foundations, government agencies, and pursue its own entrepreneurial opportunities.

Private Entities

In the past, private property owners have been the largest contributors by donating valuable land. Local and regional businesses have also provided

tax-deductible donations to the Arabia Alliance. The Heritage Area will become a popular tourist magnet and the business community has much to gain by ensuring that the Plan's programs are promoted. By supporting the Arabia Alliance, local businesses will benefit from an improved quality of life that the Heritage Area will offer employees and customers. Local businesses will do well to work with Heritage Area partners on the Plan's sustainable approach to protect the attractive assets they all share.

Businesses identified as likely donors include existing national quarry industries, Mall at Stonecrest, real estate developers, and other neighboring businesses and retailers. Regional and Fortune 500 companies that should also be encouraged to advance the Heritage Area's goals include Cox Enterprises (the Atlanta Journal-Constitution), Home Depot, The Coca-Cola Company, Southern Company (Georgia Power) and many others.

Philanthropic Organizations

Now that this Plan is complete, it will be an effective fundraising tool to strengthen alliances with private foundations and individuals that share the Arabia Alliance's passion for protecting cultural, historic and environmental legacies.

Philanthropists who have already supported the Heritage Area include the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the Turner Foundation, Atlanta Urban Resource Partnership, the Waterfall Foundation, Georgia Power Foundation, the Edna Wardlaw Fund, the Davidson Family, an anonymous Atlanta foundation and numerous individual donors. Fundraising competition is stiff among many worthy metro-Atlanta non-profits. As portions of the Plan become realized, the Arabia Alliance will continue to attract new and existing donors, especially those who want to see tangible, long-lasting results.

Government Agencies

Governments will continue to play a critical role in financially supporting the Heritage Area, mainly by

matching funds and existing staff and facility costs that allow the Arabia Alliance to claim federal dollars, and by operating their own parks, schools and related facilities. The Arabia Alliance should continue to encourage DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry counties, GA DNR and the City of Lithonia to provide these matching funds in their annual budgets for years to come. In particular, GA DNR can support the Heritage Area through technical assistance, staffing, daily operations, and maintaining educational venues and Gateways.

Entrepreneurial Ventures

The Arabia Alliance has successfully engaged in entrepreneurial opportunities to increase revenue. The group recently produced a 2005 calendar showcasing stunning photographs of the Heritage Area. Other products such as T-shirts and quality novelty items are inexpensive to produce, yet offer solid economic returns, increase visibility and promote tourism. A Heritage Area Shop can be included at each Gateway to entice visitors to buy souvenirs that support continued preservation of the Heritage Area. Festivals, bicycle and water events are other avenues to explore with partners to boost attendance and attract new audiences.

7.2 PHASING AND SETTING FIRST PRIORITIES

This Plan creates a thoughtful framework for taking a long-term view to protect and promote the Heritage Area. At this stage, priorities must be determined and resources allocated accordingly. It is recommended that these four phases become the first priorities for the Arabia Alliance team.

Phase 1: Identity and Marketing

A critical first step will be developing an easily recognizable, attractive logo and environmental graphics system that reflect the Heritage Area's heart and soul. A branding expert, hired as a consultant, should drive the process that engages input from the key stakeholders and the public. Marketing messages must be clear and compelling. They must have universal appeal, resonating with diverse audiences. Based on findings in the recent Tourism Report (See Appendix H), Heritage Area attractions have tremendous potential to draw large numbers of locals and tourists, who will enjoy the

<i>Action Criteria</i>	<i>Allocation of Federal Funds (FY2011-2015)</i>	<i>Contribution of Heritage Partnerships</i>	<i>Percent (%) of Total</i>	<i>Total</i>
Heritage Marketing & Outreach Identity Package; Marketing Package; Workshops/Forums; Festivals/Events; Product Development; Website Management	\$112,500	\$225,000	15%	\$337,500
Heritage Sites & Venues Visitor Center; Secondary Gateways; Historic Structures; Granite Interpretive Museum	\$300,000	\$600,000	40%	\$900,000
Heritage Conservation & Education Guided Tours; Guidebooks and literature	\$60,000	\$120,000	8%	\$180,000
Heritage Transportation & Recreation Trail, water and driving route; Signage; Shuttle/Trolley/Hybrid Car service	\$75,000	\$150,000	10%	\$225,000
Heritage Planning & Community Development Workshops/Forums; Review Boards; Visitor survey and evaluation studies; Gateway and Focus Area Design	\$52,500	\$105,000	7%	\$157,500
Heritage Interpretation Maps and brochures; Kiosks; Interpretive exhibits; Signage; Artwork	\$150,000	\$300,000	20%	\$450,000
TOTAL	\$750,000	\$1,500,000	100%	\$2,250,000

Table 7.1: Estimated 5 Year Costs

area's richness and spend money there.

Suggested actions:

- Collaborating with stakeholders to benefit from their experience in identity building.
- Developing an identity package and marketing materials to attract new audiences. Elements include a "family" of logos, paid advertising, maps, brochures, websites and merchandise. Designing and producing a related signage system for Gateways and venues and wayfinding routes that reinforce the new identity.
- Initiating group and self-guided tours to build new audiences who will spread the word.

Phase 2: Focus Areas and Gateways

Large-scale bricks and mortar projects must be completed in a timely manner to maintain credibility and build on the momentum already felt by the stakeholders. Cemeteries, homesteads, other historic structures and significant landscapes must be restored and protected now to make sure they exist as permanent cultural capital. These efforts will attract new visitors and send a powerful message to the immediate community that the Heritage Area is a special treasure worth supporting. Everyone involved in this planning process wants the Heritage Area to be successful, and will take pride in proving to constituents that the Plan's goals are being realized. The Arabia Alliance must work diligently with its partners to reiterate the importance of making visible progress now.

Suggested actions:

- Determining exact designs for Gateways, Welcome Facilities and other points of interest within each Focus Area.
- Initiating stakeholder collaboration to fund, design, build and maintain Gateways and venues.
- Initiating the process to create inviting displays and exhibits to entertain and educate visitors.

Phase 3: The Routes

Easy access between Gateways and venues is very important in branding and connecting the Heritage

Area as one living, outdoor museum. A well designed, well marked route and trail system will become the backbone for moving people through the Heritage Area, always with sensitivity to being good stewards of its fragile beauty and historic significance.

The Plan's Route System offers terrific opportunities for education and recreation, and will attract people of all ages and incomes. Currently, the Arabia Alliance provides assistance to PATH Foundation to build the multi-use trail network. The Arabia Alliance should seek other partners to help build the proposed routes recommended in this Plan, and make their completion a priority.

Suggested actions:

- Collaborating with the jurisdictions to select routes and acquire key parcels as necessary.
- Collaborating with GDOT to secure Scenic Byway designation for the Evans Mill-Browns Mill-Klondike Road corridor.
- Collaborating with partners and businesses to provide environmentally friendly transportation throughout the Heritage Area including hybrid cars, clean-fuel and electric shuttles, bicycles, canoes and attractive walking and jogging trails.

Phase 4: Visitors Center

Visitors need to know where to begin. They must be oriented and feel welcomed. Building a Visitors Center at Vaughters' Farm is an important priority to give the big-picture overview through hands-on activities that will engage and entertain. The Vaughters' Farm setting is the most easily accessible from the interstate system and makes an attractive first impression.

From here, most visitors will be directed to other Gateways and places that interest them. They will also learn about future attractions and improvements in progress. The Visitors Center can also feature outdoor classrooms and gathering places for the public.

Suggested actions:

- Conducting a thorough site analysis of the area

surrounding the Vaughters' historic home to determine environmentally sensitive areas including wildlife habitats and view sheds. Preliminary designs and site plans for additions can be initiated, using green building principles and techniques.

- Establishing a design, funding and maintenance plan for the Visitors Center site at Vaughters' Farm with GA DNR.
- Supporting pedestrian access and other forms of connectivity to the Route System, other Gateways and venues in close collaboration with GDOT, the counties, GA DNR and PATH Foundation.
- Initiating designs for education activities and displays specifically created for the Visitors Center.



View of Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve

7.3 CONCLUSION

*"The Great Spirit is in all things. He is in the air we breathe.
The Great Spirit is our Father. The earth is our mother.
She nourishes us; that which we put into the ground she returns to us."*

- Big Thunder, member of the Algonquin nation
late 19th century

"We have fallen heirs to the most glorious heritage a people ever received, and each one must do his part if we wish to show that the nation is worthy of its good fortune. We must keep this natural heritage for our children and our children's children, and for all who come after us."

- Theodore Roosevelt, creator of the National Park Service and
26th President of the United States

"We live healthier and more wholesome lives when we spend more time in communion with our natural environment. I believe that in the coming days and years, the cause of civil rights will become more and more about protecting open land, and about clean air and clean water. It is our fundamental right to pursue a healthy life - physically, mentally and sychologically."

- U.S. Representative John Lewis,
Fifth Congressional District, Georgia

With the completion of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan, a clearly marked path lies ahead. Though the Plan is ambitious and will take many years to complete, its goals are all within reach.

The Arabia Alliance and its partners can use the Plan's framework as a tangible road map to connect and protect the Heritage Area's diverse treasures as one gigantic living museum.

Remarkably, large areas of land remain intact. Priceless historic and cultural sites still exist. Yet, the climate is quickly changing.

As Georgia's population continues to climb, people are realizing the value of parks and natural areas as more and more greenspace is lost to development in cities and suburbs.

An Arabia Mountain Heritage Area can become another cherished place in Georgia's marvelous collection of tourist attractions, on par with Stone Mountain Park, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in downtown Atlanta, and the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area -- yet with a character all its own. Now is the time to embrace this Plan and enthusiastically rally around it.

Like ancient granite siblings, Arabia and Panola have weathered time and the elements for about 400 million years.

Perhaps they finally speak to us through this Plan.

CHAPTER 8

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

****MARCH 1, 2006 DRAFT****



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Cover Image: Ecos Environmental Design, Inc.

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1.0 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Assessment is a review and summary of the potential impacts of the five proposed management alternatives proposed for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area (AMHA or Heritage Area). This analysis is a summary of the possible impacts on the natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources of the Heritage Area. Therefore, this Environmental Assessment does not address any proposed development activities.

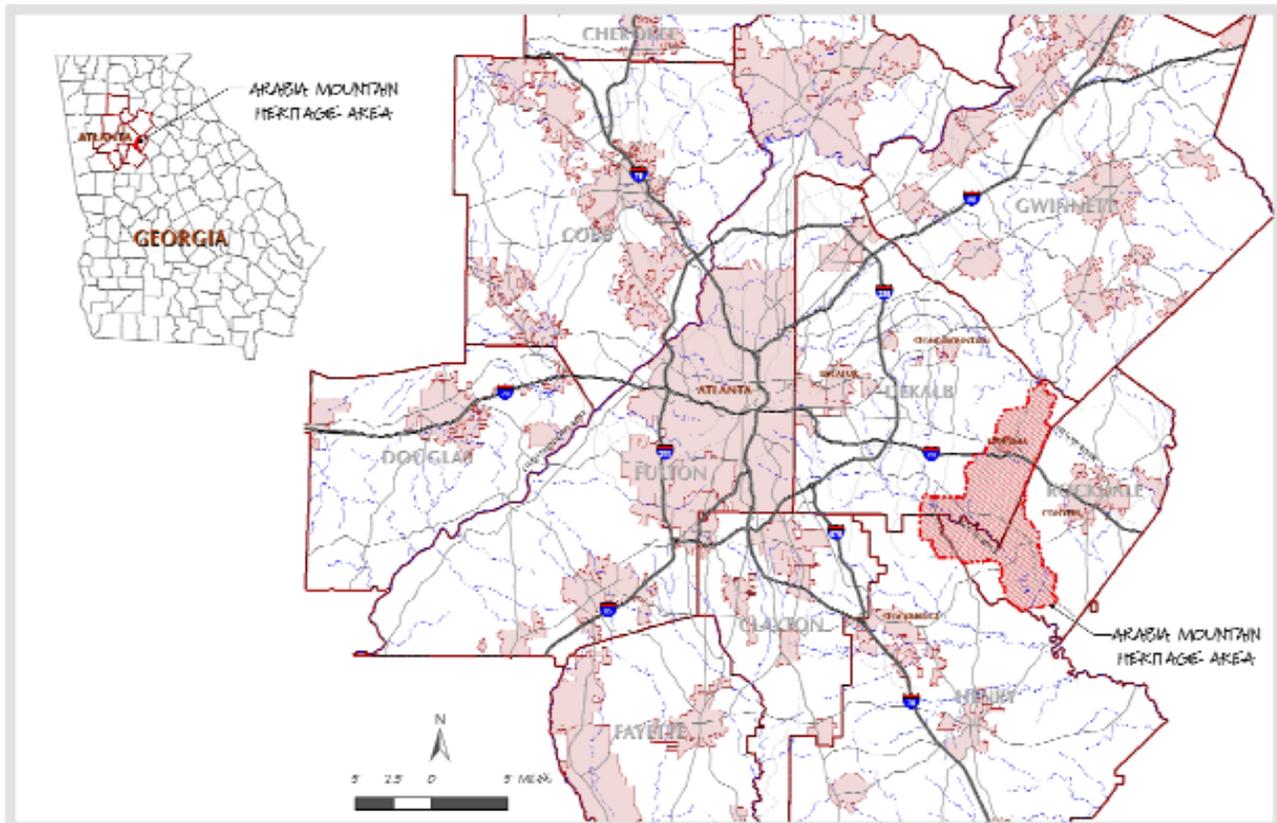
The analysis of the alternatives in this Environmental Assessment is presented as a broad overview of the potential impacts to the resources of the Heritage Area. Once the Secretary of the Interior adopts the Management Plan, actions implemented in the future will require compliance, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act

of 1969 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

There are five management alternatives presented and reviewed in this document: Alternative 1 (No Action), used as a baseline for all other alternatives; Alternative 2 (Network); Alternative 3 (Area); Alternative 4 (Cluster); and Alternative 5 (Hybrid – Preferred Alternative).

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area is approximately 40,000 acres, and is located east of the City of Atlanta. It is comprised of land in the counties of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry, including the City of Lithonia. Included in the Heritage Area are Arabia and Panola Mountains, numerous businesses, historic homesteads, Civil War battle sites, active and former quarries, religious institutions, local and State parkland, schools and private residences. The basis for the boundary was determined during the Arabia Mountain National



Heritage Area Feasibility Study (February 2001), conducted for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance (Alliance), the non-profit management entity established for the AMHA. The boundary was expanded on October 16, 2003 to include future greenspace to both the north and south. The final boundary determined during the planning process comprises approximately 64 square miles. Approximately, the Heritage Area is bounded by the Yellow River, the DeKalb/Rockdale County line, Honey Creek, Monastery of the Holy Spirit Property, Oglesby Bridge Road, Camp Creek, Union Church Road, Rock Creek, Austin Road, Pole Bridge Creek, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard, and Rock Chapel Road.

1.3 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The land that comprises the Heritage Area includes active quarries, rolling topography, rural landscapes and unique granite outcroppings, such as Arabia and Panola mountains, which are two of the State's three largest exposed granite formations. Other significant cultural features include the City of Lithonia- known for its history in the quarry industry- and the early African-American settlements found in such communities as Flat Rock and Klondike. These and other qualities all comprise a unique "cultural landscape," essentially creating an area that is rich in natural, cultural, social and economic characteristics, reflecting an on-going collaborative relationship between people and the land.

Arabia Mountain and other nearby granite outcrops are part of an area in eastern Metropolitan Atlanta that has been linked to human settlement and activity for thousands of years. From Native Americans transporting goods via the South River to Civil War battlegrounds, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area contains unique and distinct ecosystems that encompass spiritual landscapes, mountains, quarries, woodlands, lakes, rivers and farmland. Some of the plant-life is threatened and endemic or limited to the granite ecosystems of the Heritage Area. The history of human settlement in this region is intimately connected to its geological

resources, starting over 7,000 years ago with the quarrying and trading of soapstone.

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area contains layers of natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources within an approximately 64 square mile area. Many of these resources are unique and rare not only in the Atlanta Region, but in the nation. Growth pressures of the Atlanta Metropolitan Area make it key to protect and preserve the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area. The process of establishing the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area began through the efforts of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, which is a non-profit organization that includes environmental organizations, community leaders, and government officials. The Alliance contracted ICON architecture to complete the *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. The Feasibility Study concluded the following:

- The designation of a National Heritage Area
- Creation of a Definite Boundary for the Heritage Area containing a concentration of Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources (or unique features)
- Defined key Stakeholders in the Heritage Area: Counties of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry; City of Lithonia; State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources; Evans Mill, Klondike, South Rockdale, and Flat Rock communities, Monastery, Churches, Stonecrest Mall, etc.
- Identified possible "Themes" for interpretation based upon the Heritage Area's history and culture
- Recommended the completion of a Management Plan for the Heritage Area to comprehensively plan for the preservation and interpretation of the Heritage Area's natural, scenic, cultural, and historical resources

The nine-month planning process for the Management Plan began with the establishment of a Steering Committee comprised of the key stakeholders in the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area. The Steering Committee consists of voting

members from the community, community businesses, the three counties of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry, the City of Lithonia, and the State of Georgia, as well as a non-voting advisory group to provide assistance in decision-making. This committee was created to provide valuable insight into the current climate and future goals of the Heritage Area, and to offer guidance on the plan elements, potential strategies and direction for the community meetings. The first task of the Steering Committee was to select a Consultant Team to complete a Management Plan and Environmental Assessment for the proposed Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area, as required by the Secretary of the Interior for National Heritage Area designation. The selected Consultant Team consists of Ecos Environmental Design, Inc., ICON architecture, inc., Planners for Environmental Quality (PEQ), and The Media Kitchen.

The Consultant Team collected, interpreted, and analyzed all data pertinent to the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area and completed a series of inventory and analysis maps of all natural, cultural, historical, scenic, recreational, and economic resources. The team then implemented a Management Plan website as a communication tool throughout the planning process. All maps, data, events, and news completed during the project were posted on the website for public display and comment. Monthly meetings with the Steering Committee, a day long Steering Committee Concept Charrette, and three Community Meetings were conducted to present and receive information and comments. During the meetings, the community was engaged in various interactive sessions, such as placing dots on features of highest priority, making comments on sticky notes, marking on maps, and filling out surveys.

At the first Community Meeting, the Consultant Team introduced the planning process, purpose, and schedule. The accomplishments of the Heritage Area were highlighted and community members gave feedback on the environmental issues, challenges, interpretation possibilities, and educational, economic, and marketing opportunities. At the day long Steering Committee Concept

Charrette that followed, the committee explored why the Heritage Area is unique, what stories should be told, and where should interpretation occur. The Committee analyzed the community comments and selected Management Plan Goals for the Heritage Area. The goals and comments combined with the discussion of interpretation themes and opportunities assisted the group in creating three alternative concept plans. The Consultant Team refined the concept plans and presented the three alternatives for community comment and review at the Second Community Meeting. A data and map review was also conducted at the meeting to ensure that all significant resources had been documented.

Based upon the consolidated comments of the community and Steering Committee, the Consultant Team merged the three alternative concepts into one concept plan. They presented this draft concept plan to the Steering Committee for additional feedback. After further design, analysis, and refinement, the draft concept plan was presented at the Third and Final Community Meeting. The Consultant Team explained that the concept plan will incorporate a strategy for preserving and interpreting the resources of the Heritage Area and provide a means to set priorities and make strategic improvements and investments. The community was also asked to provide feedback on strategies and implementation priorities for the draft concept plan.

The next step was to amend the draft concept plan based on community comments and Steering Committee review. Throughout the Steering Committee and Community Facilitation Process, the Consultant Team continued to work on the compilation of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Document. Three components were included with the Management Plan. The first was this Environmental Assessment, which meets NPS/DO-12 requirements and includes an Environmental Screening Form. It analyzes several alternative approaches and describes how each impacts the Heritage Area's resources, as well as the overall Vision. This document will provide the

information necessary to select the environmentally preferred alternative and determine if there is a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The second component is the Interpretation Strategy that details the themes of the Heritage Area and describes the appropriate approach for potential venues and programs. The Implementation Program is the third component. This involved completing an inventory of resources; outlining the vision, goals, mission, and objectives; explaining the strategies; identifying the responsibility of key players; proposing a timeline and phasing of strategies and programs; creating a funding strategy; and describing the structure of the management entity. The completed Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan will provide vision, practical steps for its implementation, and future guidance for the Heritage Area.

The adoption of a Management Plan for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area will establish guidelines and strategies that will allow the Heritage Area and its management entity to:

- Preserve distinctive natural, historic and cultural resources within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental and educational opportunities that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors
- Preserve existing landscapes from encroaching commercial and residential development
- Prohibit negative environmental effects from damaging the resources of the area (i.e. air and water pollution, etc.)
- Initiate partnerships between private, public and not-for-profit organizations that can accomplish the Heritage Area's goals.
- Create a sustainable Heritage Area that successfully achieves a balance in economic, social and environmental issues of the area.
- Improve interpretation to educate and encourage visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area.
- Focus interpretation of the area's history and culture at key locations or places so visitors can comprehend the Heritage Area's

'themes' and stories.

Implementing a Management plan will:

- Educate visitors and residents on the history and culture of the Heritage Area
- Stimulate a diversity of tourism in the area – fulfilling the current void in attracting visitors with cultural and historical interests, as well as those interested in unique ecosystems and recreational opportunities
- Strengthen the Heritage Area's existing greenway trail system, by advocating an extension of the system
- Provide an opportunity for the Heritage Area to engage in sustainable practices, such as expanding the multi-use trail system, preserving ecosystems, restoring riparian habitats and fostering youth activities.
- Integrate the importance of historical preservation with ecosystem conservation
- Engage public-private-non profit coalition opportunities in the region in order to improve the quality of life in the area.

1.4 NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION

Because the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area is not a designated National Heritage Area, there is no requirement to prepare a Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. However, the Alliance continues to work to obtain designation and anticipates that this will soon occur. Therefore, in preparation for the designation, the Alliance feels that the planning process should move forward and this includes the Management Plan and Environmental Assessment. The increased development pressures of the Atlanta Metropolitan Area heighten the need to establish a plan to protect, connect, and educate. The people within the region and visitors need to be made aware of the many significant resources and the Heritage Area's rich story. Through the combination of environmental information and public involvement, the Management Plan will establish goals, guidelines, and strategies for the Heritage Area. The Management Plan will also outline the structure of a Management Entity to implement the

Management Plan by receiving and dispersing funds and providing technical assistance.

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area was designated a National Heritage Area by Congress on _____. The legislation, Public Law _____ requires that a Management Plan with Environmental Assessment be submitted to the Secretary of Interior for approval. The National Environmental Policy Act states that both its purpose and the National Park Service mission aim for the “conservation and protection of our nation’s resources for the benefit of future generations.” The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area needs organization and a Management Plan to evaluate the impacts of issues on the Heritage Area’s unique natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources so that they may be enjoyed and understood by future generations.

1.5 MISSION AND GOALS

The purpose and goals for the Heritage Area have evolved from initial planning efforts and steering committee and community meetings during the Management Plan process. The current management entity for the AMHA is the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance. The mission of the Alliance is to ‘ensure that the recreational, natural and historical resources of Arabia Mountain and its environs are protected, connected by greenway corridors and well managed to provide citizens and future generations the opportunity to enjoy this magnificent feature of Georgia’s heritage.’

The overall theme of the Management Plan is to **protect, connect, and educate**. Below is the list of goals, organized from highest to lowest priority, as established during the planning process:

Preservation Goal: To protect historic resources in the Heritage Area, such as:

- City of Lithonia, its structures, corridors and communities
- Existing and former Quarries and related resources
- Existing and former Farms, Mills, and other culturally significant structures
- Cemeteries from past cultures

- Native American and African American Settlements

Preservation is best achieved by explaining the relevance of the Heritage Area to the larger community through interpretive opportunities that allow visitors to understand and experience the uniqueness of the area first hand.

Education Goal: To create new learning opportunities / facilities that will increase:

- Appreciation of the environment
- Appreciation of the history
- Knowledge of the connection to the region, and the historical impact to the United States
- Knowledge of sustainable preservation and growth practices

By engaging the Heritage Area’s schools and organized groups, the vision of the Heritage Area and the mission of protection and connection can be spread throughout the region. Education is the primary step in fulfilling the goal of preserving this unique area for future generations.

Economic Development Goal: To encourage “Smart Growth” & Sustainability by:

- Supporting acceptable growth management techniques
- Engaging in tourism and economic development that respects resources
- Encouraging a partnership / team approach to the Heritage Area’s management

Many communities within the Heritage Area are searching for ways to improve the current economic climate. Much of the Heritage Area is experiencing rampant residential development, due to the Heritage Area’s resources and proximity to metropolitan Atlanta. Increasing tourism; providing recreational and educational facilities; and promoting community development opportunities will bring economic benefits to the residents of the Heritage Area. The Plan recommends a template for how to efficiently handle the future residential and commercial demands that also protects the quality of life.

Conservation Goal: To protect & restore the Heritage Area’s natural resources, such as:

- Riparian corridors in the Heritage Area
- Arabia and Panola Mountains, and their unique flora and fauna
- Wildlife / Plant life, and their relationship to the granite environment
- Vast array of Ecosystems & landscapes within the Heritage Area

Future protection of the Heritage Area’s unique landscapes and environments is critical to its sustainability. These resources are finite, and must be properly explored, viewed, protected and highlighted in a manner that is engaging and informative to visitors and residents.

Recreation Goal: To expand open space and recreation opportunities through:

- Existing and future trails and greenways that connect the Heritage Area’s resources
- Encouraging both active and passive opportunities
- Expansion of parks and greenspaces
- Addition of public facilities

Recreational opportunities will improve the quality of life and the community’s appreciation of the Heritage Area’s regional significance. Greenspace and recreation are the primary criteria for determining the livability of an area. Further, greenspace expansion is necessary for improved water quality and wildlife habitat protection in the area.

Interpretation Goal: To tell the diverse story of the region:

- The geology and the land
- Granite quarrying and its impacts
- The communities and settlers
- Unique ecosystems, wildlife and plant life

Designating actions to explain how the Heritage Area has affected generations of residents, as well as construction efforts in other parts of the US, will increase awareness of the Heritage Area’s unique background and relevancy to the region. Interpretation fosters stewardship and is critical for

future protection and conservation efforts. Wars, diverse cultures and industry have shaped this area significantly, and the breadth of this story should be shared with others.

1.6 RELATED ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS

This document was preceded by a feasibility study to propose the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area be designated as a National Heritage Area. In February 2001, the *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study* prepared for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance was completed by ICON architecture inc.

1.7 DECISIONS TO BE MADE

The proposed Management Plan represents a comprehensive strategy for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area that will stimulate economic development, preserve key landscapes and conserve historic and cultural resources through sustainable practices. To be successful, the following decisions must be considered:

- **Protect**
 - Most effective and sustainable method of protecting, conserving and interpreting the Heritage Area’s cultural and natural resources for current and future generations.
 - Cooperative efforts to initiate a South River Greenway Corridor Master Plan among the counties, local owners and other public entities.
 - Continued maintenance and enhancement of key publicly owned landscapes, including Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Panola Mountain State Conservation Park, South Rockdale Community Park, Vaughters’ Farm and others.
- **Connect**
 - Appropriate means for integrating the future economic and environmental actions of others into the Management plan in a manner

that complements the AMHA's management goals.

- Continued maintenance and construction of the multi-use trail network to promote recreation and sustainable transportation between the Heritage Area's residential and commercial centers, as well as schools, parks and recreational centers.
- Balance between the interest of the residents of the Heritage Area and those of the City of Lithonia, State of Georgia, the counties of DeKalb, Henry, and Rockdale and other non-profit entities with regards to tourism, economic development, and preservation of resources.

- **Educate**

- Most effective method for educating visitors on the significance of the Heritage Area's cultural and natural resources.
- Which stories should be told about the Heritage Area, and where should this interpretation occur.

1.8 SCOPING AND ISSUES

The alternatives presented in this plan are conceptual, thus the issues and the potential impacts of the alternatives on the environmental resources will be discussed more generally and strategically. Separate, more specific federally assisted projects within the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area will require separate more detailed environmental evaluations.

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area issues were identified through community meeting comments, steering committee direction, the research and exploration of the environmental resources, and the preceding *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. The impact topics are listed below in Section 1.8.1 with their corresponding issues of concern.

1.8.1 Impact Topics and Associated Issues

The following impact topics are listed with their corresponding issues.

Natural Resources – Sustainably preserving natural resources while allowing educational, recreational, and economic opportunities in the Heritage Area. Preserving, conserving, and protecting natural resources with development and visitation pressures.

- **Topographic and Geological Features** – Preserving the geological features and the unique ecosystems they create within a rapidly developing metropolitan area.
- **Hydrologic Systems/Riparian Corridors and Water Quality** – Enhancing the riparian corridors to improve the current poor water quality and biodiversity, while preventing increased non-point and point source water pollution.
- **Vegetation and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species** – Protecting rare and endemic species and vegetation communities from foot damage, invasive exotic species, and development.
- **Fauna and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species** – Preventing the elimination of unique wildlife habitats and corridors.
- **Air Quality** – Improving air quality by increasing the use of alternative transportation, planning that links transportation with land uses, and increasing the efficiency of existing transportation and land use infrastructure.

Cultural Resources – Educating the visitor on the cultural, archeological, and historical resources by telling the story of the Heritage Area in a cohesive and comprehensive manner. Simultaneously protecting and preserving the sites and structures.

- **Archeological Resources** – Preserving existing sites and promoting studies to prevent undiscovered sites from being destroyed by development.
- **Cultural and Historical Resources** – Preserve, educate, and maintain cultural and historical sites and structures.

Socio-Economic Considerations – Promote sustainable environmental planning to protect important resources and to balance and direct growth.

- **Recreation/Open Space Resources** –

Promoting recreational and greenway opportunities, while providing public safety and preventing detrimental impacts from overuse.

- **Regional Growth and Land Use**

Pressures – Prevent and/or alleviate parking issues and traffic congestion with increased development and visitation in an environmentally sustainable method.

- **Tourism** – Stimulating economic development and tourism while also practicing sustainability.

The impact topics and issues are discussed in greater detail in Section 3.0 Affected Environment and 4.0 Environmental Consequences.

1.8.2 Impact Measurement

The impact analysis predicts the magnitude of the issues or the relationship between the alternatives and the resources. In order to do this, a methodology has been established to evaluate both the direct and indirect impacts. The intensity, context, duration, and timing of the impacts are examined in Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences. The following terms will be used in comparing the environmental impacts among alternatives:

- *Negligible* – The impact is barely perceptible or not measurable
- *Minor* – The impact is slightly detectable and measurable but is either localized or would not adversely affect resources.
- *Moderate* – The impact is clearly detectable and could have appreciable effect on resources.
- *Major* – The impact is substantial and highly noticeable or measurable.
- *Short-term* – The impact lasts less than one year.
- *Long-term* – The impact lasts one year or longer.

The impact analysis will also state if the resulting impacts are *adverse* or *beneficial* to the environmental resources. Table 3 provides a Summary of the Direct and Indirect Impacts for the Alternatives. Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences looks in

greater detail at the impact of alternatives upon the Heritage Area's resources based upon the above

2.0 ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives section is the heart of this Environmental Assessment. This section describes in detail the No Action alternative, the proposed action, and other reasonable alternatives that were studied in detail. Then based on the information and analysis presented in the sections on the Affected Environment and the Probable Impacts, this section presents the beneficial and adverse environmental effects of all alternatives in comparative form, providing a clear basis for choice among the options for the decision maker and the public.

The alternatives were devised through public outreach during the planning process. An extensive outreach process guided by the project agenda and schedule established for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan was conducted during the study. The outreach process utilized a variety of methods for engaging and informing the public including steering committee meetings, project database, direct mail and e-mail, public meetings, advertising, newsletters and a website. As a result of the many outreach techniques utilized, significant input has been received from the public.

The first alternative was included because the NEPA process requires that a No Action alternative be considered. In October 2004, the Steering Committee, comprised of key stakeholders in the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area, participated in a Concept Charrette that after refinement by the Consultant Team resulted in three additional alternatives. The three alternatives were presented during the second Community Meeting in November 2004. Based upon community comments, along with additional feedback from the Steering Committee, a fifth alternative was created. The community provided comments on the fifth alternative during the third and final Community Meeting in March 2005.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The natural, historical and cultural resources prevalent in the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area provide

an exceptional opportunity for recreation, environmental education and heritage preservation. In order to effectively manage the recreation, visitor experience, environmental concerns and fiscal issues of the Heritage Area, the project team, steering committee and community members analyzed a number of approaches.

The five alternative approaches assessed in this document are as follows:

Alternative 1: No Action: This alternative, required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), is a continuation of current management and procedures.

Alternative 2: Network: Improve trails and key byways as the primary corridors of interpretation that encourage visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area.

Alternative 3: Area: Preserve distinctive natural and man-made landscapes within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental quality that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors.

Alternative 4: Cluster: Focus interpretation of the Heritage Area's history and culture at key locations that become the "gateways" to understand the Heritage Area's 'themes' and story.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred): Combines characteristics of Alternatives 2, 3, and 4, and would define a central visitor center.

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1: No Action

This alternative, required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), is a continuation of current management and procedures.

Under the current climate, the Heritage Area would not receive federal funds, and would rely solely on volunteers and donations for environmental education and preservation activities. The current management group, the Arabia Alliance- a volunteer organization comprised of residents, civic-minded individuals, non-profit organizations, political leaders, governmental agencies and community activists – while viable, would have no guidance as to the appropriate programs and venues that should be completed for the Heritage Area. Further, the staffing for this group is currently one member; therefore lack of future staffing will compromise the organization's capabilities in the future. There would exist no framework for funding and resources. Development in the Heritage Area is occurring at a rapid pace, and without a plan, key resources could be negatively affected. Marketing opportunities- to both visitors and residents- would be missed, and the lack of knowledge about the Heritage Area could be detrimental to its conservation and preservation in the future.

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT - 'NETWORK'

CONCEPT

IMPROVE TRAILS AND KEY BYWAYS AS THE PRIMARY CORRIDORS OF INTERPRETATION THAT ENCOURAGE VISITORS TO EXPERIENCE THE SITES AND HISTORY OF THE HERITAGE AREA.

POSSIBLE THEMES FOR TRAIL & DRIVING ROUTES

'LAND OF ROCKS & RIVERS'

--- (TRAIL)
 --- (DRIVING)

'STONE-CUTTERS'

--- (TRAIL)
 --- (DRIVING)

'EARLY SETTLERS'

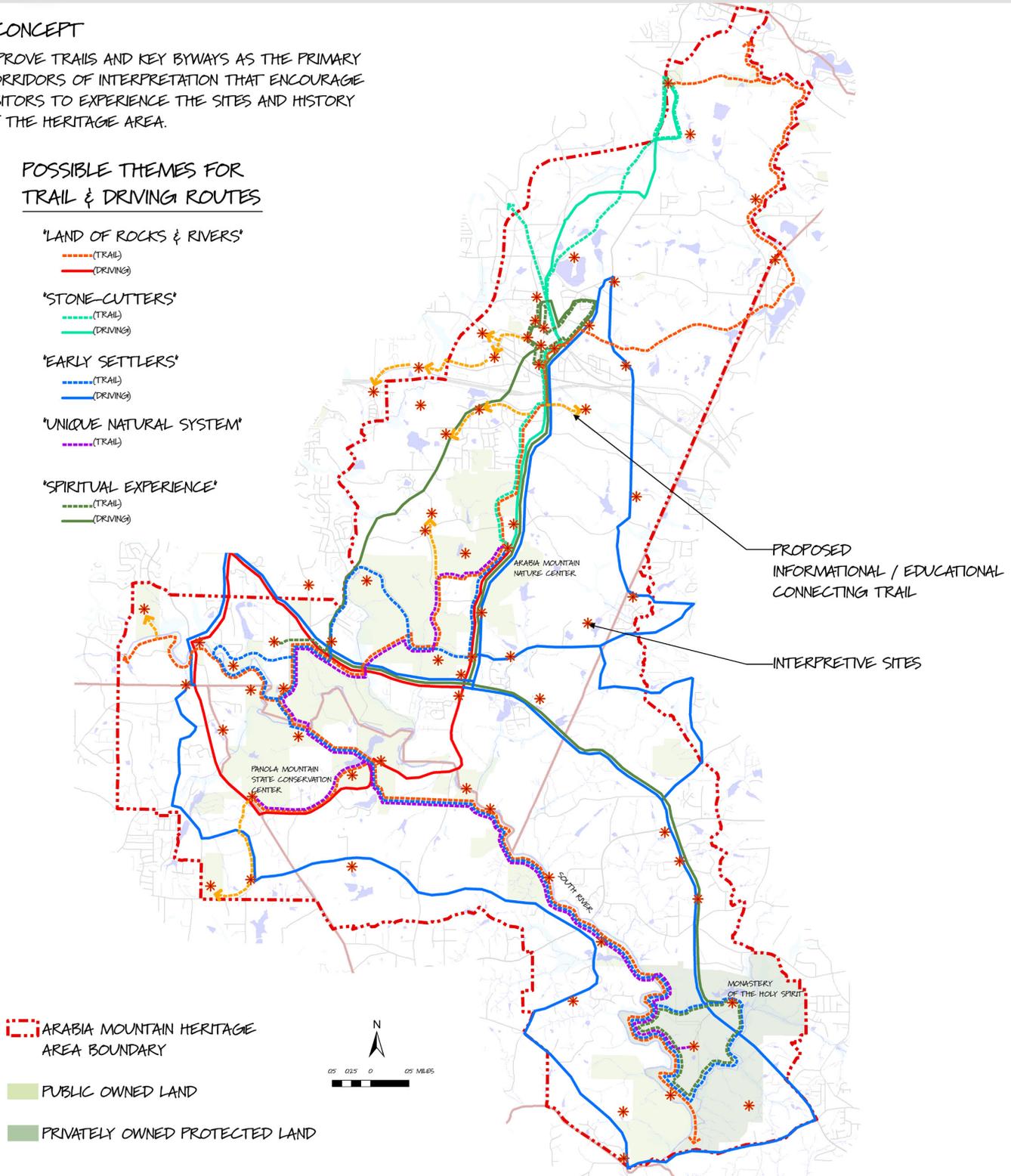
--- (TRAIL)
 --- (DRIVING)

'UNIQUE NATURAL SYSTEM'

--- (TRAIL)

'SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE'

--- (TRAIL)
 --- (DRIVING)



Alternative 2: Network

Utilize trails and key byways as the primary corridors of interpretation, encouraging visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area. The Network alternative focuses on routes as the primary access to key features, venues and facilities within the Heritage Area. The concept is to experience the environment through a number of interpretive facilities along a route system that links heritage resources.

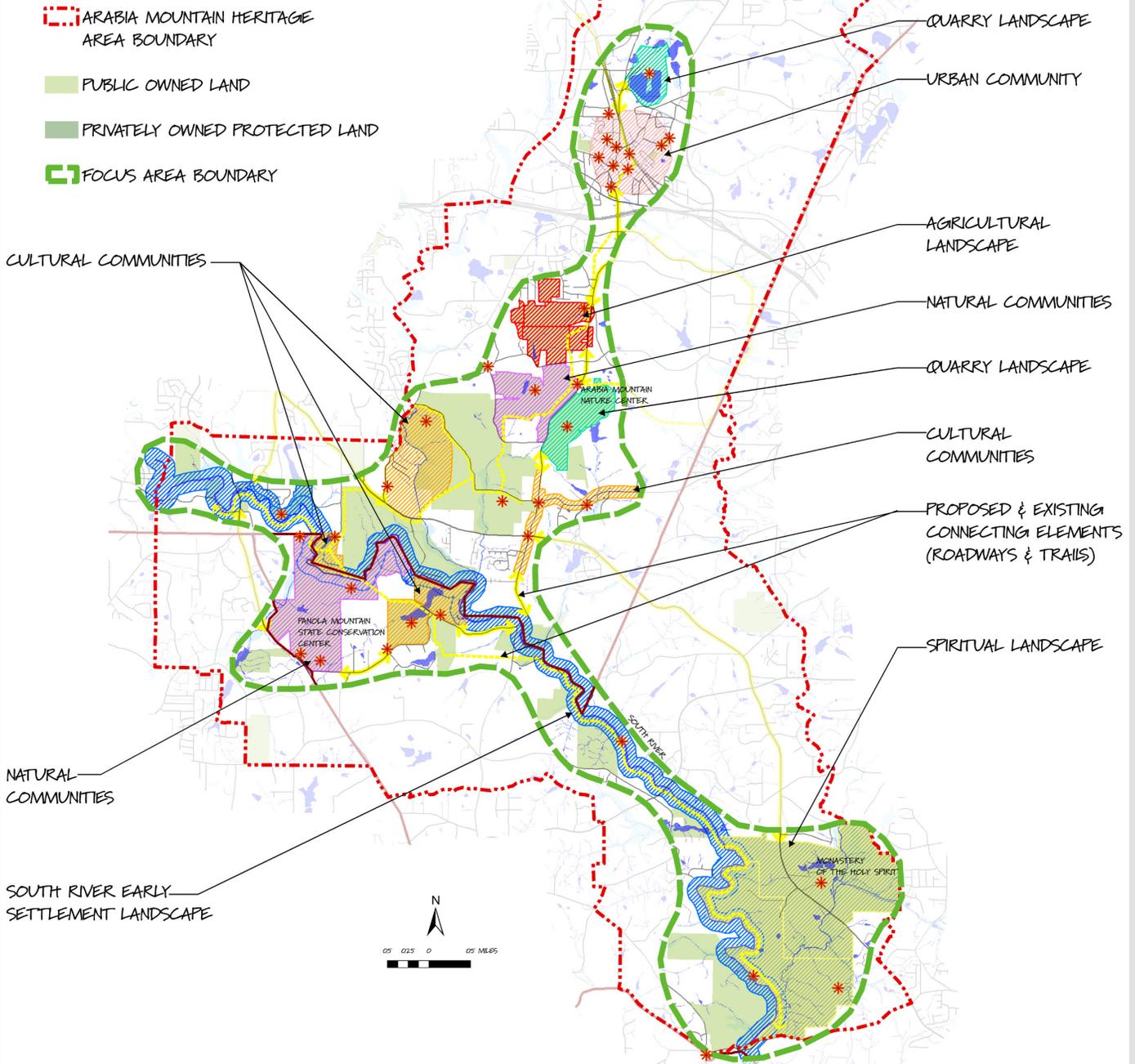
The Network serves as a connector and unifying element of the Heritage Area. Spur trails from the primary north-south route will allow visitors to explore diverse features of the Heritage Area. The Network concept envisions existing and future trails, identified roadways and selected waterways to serve as the means for visitors to initially experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area. Visitors along this network of routes can learn about the history and significance of the Heritage Area at key venues, on guided tours and at existing and proposed facilities. Once in place, these routes could be ‘customized’ based on such themes as historic homesteads; natural areas and wildlife; quarrying and granite; etc. Possible gateways- or access points- onto this network concept include existing trailheads (i.e. Stonecrest Mall or Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve); Panola Mountain State Conservation Park; future facilities in the City of Lithonia; the Klondike community and along the South River.

The Network concept emphasizes the experience of moving through the Heritage Area as the primary means to understand and learn about it. By utilizing interpretive signage, designated roadways and trails, informational kiosks and new and existing facilities, the Network concept focuses on the visitor *experiencing* the sites and history of the Heritage Area.

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT - 'AREA'

CONCEPT

PRESERVE DISTINCTIVE NATURAL AND MAN-MADE LANDSCAPES WITHIN THE HERITAGE AREA AS LARGE SCALE AREAS OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY THAT COMMUNICATE THE HISTORY AND CULTURE TO RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.



Alternative 3: Area

Preserve distinctive natural and man-made landscapes within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental quality that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors.

The Area concept seeks to enhance and preserve the quality of the Heritage Area's landscapes by differentiating areas of varying character and encouraging local entities to preserve these settings. The Area concept emphasizes the branding and identity of different environments to educate the user on the complexities of the Heritage Area.

Visitors to the Heritage Area will experience key environments that effectively convey the rich culture and history of the Heritage Area. The visitor will understand the story of the Heritage Area through these uniquely different 'places' in the landscape. Preservation of key landscapes is the focus of both the management and educational experience of this concept. The vast difference between the urban fabric of the City of Lithonia and the agricultural beauty of Vaughters' farm is just one example of how the Area concept will effectively convey the dynamic relationship between the culture, history and landscape of this unique and diverse place.

The selected environments to be highlighted in this concept will be connected and accessed via the existing (and future) trail system and roadways. Possible stories that can be told at specific landscapes include:

- City of Lithonia- The story of the people in the 'place of rock'
- Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve -The granite impact: flora, fauna and geology
- Vaughters' farm- The agricultural evolution
- Panola Mountain State Conservation Park- Natural systems and the relationship to the South River

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPT - 'CLUSTER'

CONCEPT

FOCUS INTERPRETATION OF THE AREA'S HISTORY AND CULTURE AT KEY LOCATIONS THAT BECOME THE 'GATEWAYS' TO UNDERSTAND THE HERITAGE AREA'S 'THEMES' AND STORY.

 ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARY

 PUBLIC OWNED LAND

 PRIVATELY OWNED PROTECTED LAND

 FOCUS AREA BOUNDARY

CLUSTER C THEME:
'NATURAL SYSTEMS OF
THE HERITAGE AREA'

PANOLA MOUNTAIN
STATE CONSERVATION
PARK GATEWAY

PROPOSED & EXISTING
CONNECTING ELEMENTS
(ROADWAYS & TRAILS)

CLUSTER A THEME:
'PEOPLE OF THE
HERITAGE AREA'

CITY OF LITHONIA
GATEWAY

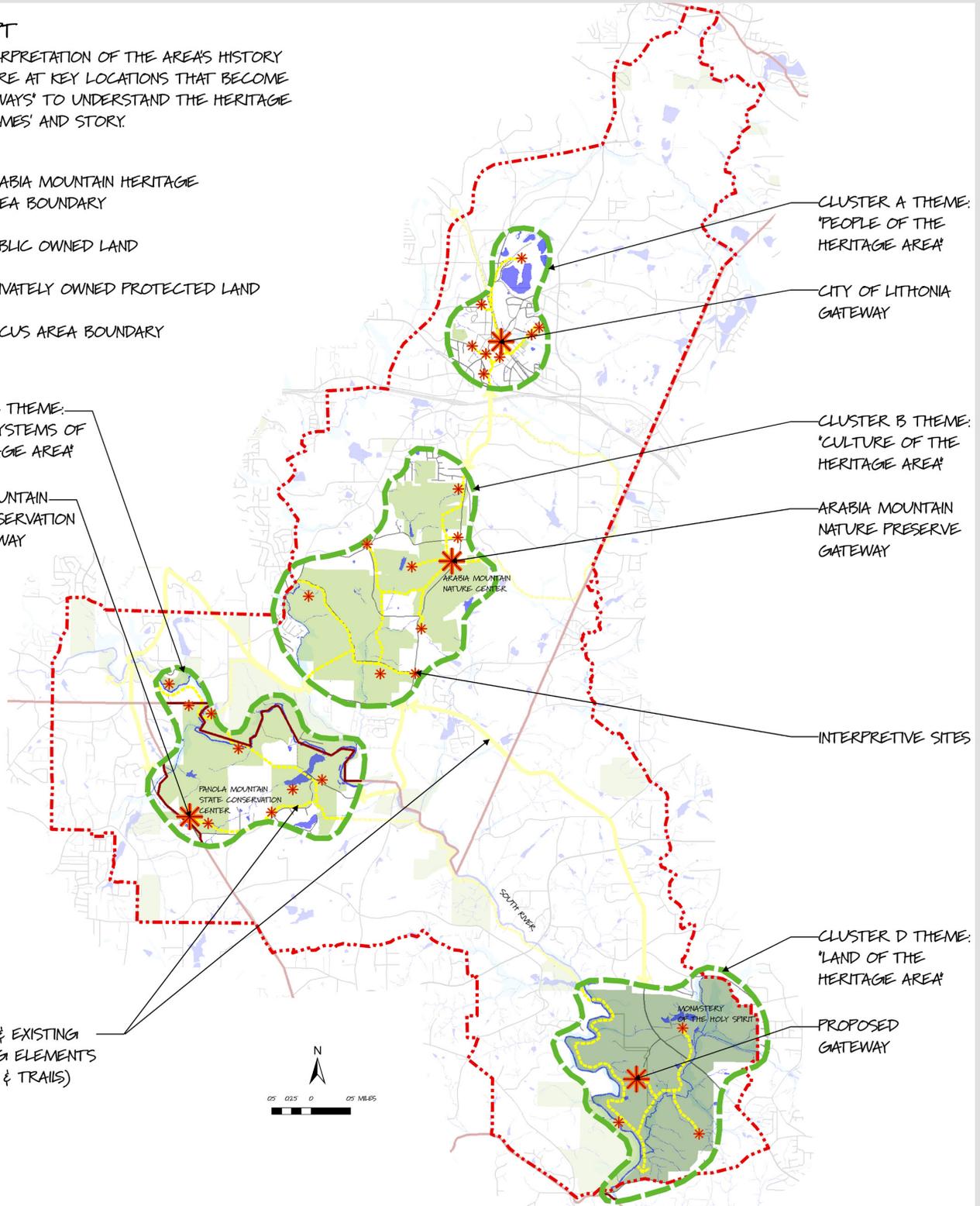
CLUSTER B THEME:
'CULTURE OF THE
HERITAGE AREA'

ARABIA MOUNTAIN
NATURE PRESERVE
GATEWAY

INTERPRETIVE SITES

CLUSTER D THEME:
'LAND OF THE
HERITAGE AREA'

PROPOSED
GATEWAY



Alternative 4: Cluster

Focus interpretation of the Heritage Area's history and culture at key locations that become the 'gateways' to understand the Heritage Area's 'themes,' or stories. The Cluster concept utilizes a series of areas (or clusters) to communicate the rich story of the Heritage Area. Each cluster serves as a gateway into the Heritage Area, thereby clearly and comprehensively representing a particular subject or theme. The intent of this concept is to educate the visitor on four major themes through experiences and interpretation at four key locations within the Heritage Area.

Each cluster utilizes a gateway facility to provide interpretive information to engage the visitor. The clusters are connected to one another via a driving and walking tour via the existing and proposed multi-use trail system.

This concept provides four clusters that allow the visitor to 'customize' the experience and story based on interest, time or accessibility:

The gateway for *Cluster A: City of Lithonia* utilizes an existing building within the city limits, and highlights the relationship of *People of the Heritage Area*. Additional locations for interpretation within Lithonia could include historic structures, Main Street, churches, cemeteries, and the connection to the existing multi-use trail system.

The gateway for *Cluster B: The Davidson- Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve* highlights and interprets the stories of the *Culture of the Heritage Area*, utilizing the existing (and potentially expanded) Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include Vaughters' farm, the PATH trail system, Evans Mill, the surrounding cemeteries and churches, Native American sites and historic homesteads.

The gateway for *Cluster C: Panola Mountain State Conservation Park* utilizes the existing (and potentially

expanded) Panola Mountain Interpretive Center, and highlights the *Natural Systems of the Heritage Area*. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include future connections to South River via the PATH trail system and Native American sites.

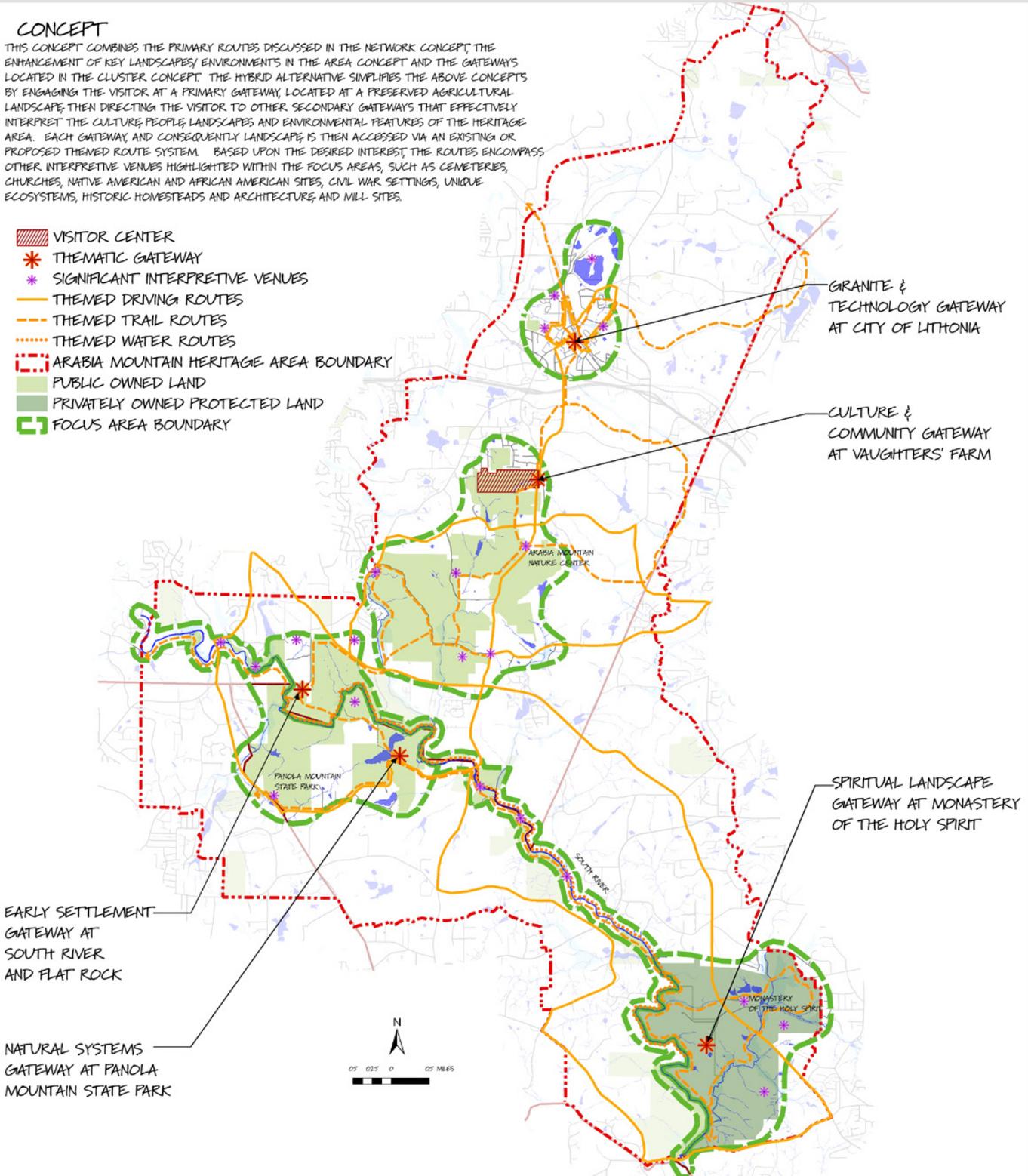
The gateway for *Cluster D: The Monastery of the Holy Spirit* interprets the stories of the *Land of the Heritage Area*, utilizing a proposed facility located adjacent to the South River. Possible additional locations for interpretation within this gateway include the Monastery grounds, future connections to South River via the PATH trail system and Native American and African American sites.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE - 'HYBRID'

CONCEPT

THIS CONCEPT COMBINES THE PRIMARY ROUTES DISCUSSED IN THE NETWORK CONCEPT, THE ENHANCEMENT OF KEY LANDSCAPES/ ENVIRONMENTS IN THE AREA CONCEPT AND THE GATEWAYS LOCATED IN THE CLUSTER CONCEPT. THE HYBRID ALTERNATIVE SIMPLIFIES THE ABOVE CONCEPTS BY ENGAGING THE VISITOR AT A PRIMARY GATEWAY, LOCATED AT A PRESERVED AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE, THEN DIRECTING THE VISITOR TO OTHER SECONDARY GATEWAYS THAT EFFECTIVELY INTERPRET THE CULTURE, PEOPLE, LANDSCAPES AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES OF THE HERITAGE AREA. EACH GATEWAY, AND CONSEQUENTLY LANDSCAPE, IS THEN ACCESSED VIA AN EXISTING OR PROPOSED THEMED ROUTE SYSTEM. BASED UPON THE DESIRED INTEREST, THE ROUTES ENCOMPASS OTHER INTERPRETIVE VENUES HIGHLIGHTED WITHIN THE FOCUS AREAS, SUCH AS CEMETERIES, CHURCHES, NATIVE AMERICAN AND AFRICAN AMERICAN SITES, CIVIL WAR SETTINGS, UNIQUE ECOSYSTEMS, HISTORIC HOMESTEADS AND ARCHITECTURE, AND MILL SITES.

-  VISITOR CENTER
-  THEMATIC GATEWAY
-  SIGNIFICANT INTERPRETIVE VENUES
-  THEMED DRIVING ROUTES
-  THEMED TRAIL ROUTES
-  THEMED WATER ROUTES
-  ARABIA MOUNTAIN HERITAGE AREA BOUNDARY
-  PUBLIC OWNED LAND
-  PRIVATELY OWNED PROTECTED LAND
-  FOCUS AREA BOUNDARY



Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

Combines characteristics of Alternatives 2,3, and 4, and defines a central visitor center. This alternative evolved during the planning process into the Preferred Alternative. This concept combines the primary routes discussed in the Network Concept (alternative 2), the enhancement of key landscapes/ environments in the Area Concept (alternative 3) and the gateways located in the Cluster Concept (alternative 4). The Hybrid alternative simplifies the above concepts by engaging the visitor at a primary gateway, located at a preserved agricultural landscape, and then directing the visitor to other secondary gateways (currently under non-profit or public ownership) located at themed focus areas that effectively interpret the culture, people, landscapes and environmental features of the Heritage Area.

The proposed gateways are currently under different levels of protection from development, with a majority under public ownership. This alternative encourages visitors to experience the resources that make the Heritage Area what it is today.

The central visitor center, or primary gateway, located at Vaughters’ farm, provides an all-encompassing historic and cultural account of the Heritage Area. This visitor center is the central focus of interpretation, and provides educational opportunities, wildlife habitat protection, and historic architecture. Each gateway facility will highlight and interpret a theme of the Heritage Area, defined by the title of the focus area itself. Due to the fact that this gateway is located at an historic agricultural landscape, Culture is the highlighted theme at this focus area. This gateway is located along existing vehicular and pedestrian routes, and is centrally located within the Heritage Area, allowing the visitor to easily access the other four focus areas and gateways: Lithonia Woman’s Club (Granite Industry & Community Focus Area); Panola Mountain State Conservation Park (Natural Systems Focus Area); South River and Flat Rock Community (Early Settlement Focus Area); and Monastery of the Holy Spirit (Spiritual Landscapes Focus Area).

Each gateway, and consequently focus area, is then accessed via an existing or proposed driving,

vehicular or water route system. These routes are also themed based upon five distinct interpretive opportunities/ interests: the Land of Rocks and Rivers; Stonecutters; Early Settlers; Unique Natural Systems and Spiritual Experience. Based upon the desired interest, each route encompasses other interpretive venues, such as cemeteries; churches; Native American and African American sites; Civil War settings; unique ecosystems; historic homesteads and architecture and mill sites.

2.3 COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES

In order to ensure the Preferred Plan addresses the purpose and need for the AMHA, the alternatives have been compared based upon the Heritage Area’s goals. The goals were established through initial planning efforts and steering committee and community meetings during the Management Planning Process. Refer to Section 1.5 Mission and Goals for a detailed description of the goals.

Table 1 briefly reviews the general concept of each alternative. Each alternative is examined and compared with other alternatives and to what degree each meets the Management Plan goals. The effectiveness to which each alternative meets the goals is illustrated using a point rating system. In the table, a rating of High (2 points) represents a very good effectiveness to which each alternative meets the goals is illustrated using a point rating system. In section 4 Environmental Consequences, the alternatives and their potential impacts are covered in detail.

Table 1: Overview Comparison of Alternatives
 Source of Point Rating System: Cane River National Heritage Area Draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

FACTOR	ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION	ALTERNATIVE 2: NETWORK	ALTERNATIVE 3: AREA	ALTERNATIVE 4: CLUSTER	ALTERNATIVE 5: HYBRID (PREFERRED)
General Concept	The continuation of the current operation of the heritage area by the Arabia Alliance.	Improve trails and key byways as the primary corridors of interpretation that encourage visitors to experience the sites and history of the Heritage Area.	Preserve distinctive natural and man-made landscapes within the Heritage Area as large-scale areas of environmental quality that communicate the history and culture to residents and visitors.	Focus interpretation of the area's history and culture at key locations that become the "gateways" to understand the Heritage Area's 'themes' and story.	Focus interpretation of the area's unique significance at a central visitor's center. Direct visitors to customize their experience to secondary landscapes and venues utilizing themed trails and byways.
Preservation	M Alliance would continue its fundraising, marketing and resource preservation efforts for the heritage area. Private property owners would continue to individually protect their property. There would exist a lack of assistance and project programming. Many key historic homes and unique landscapes are currently protected by public and private entities.	M Through interpretation along themed routes and at key venues, visitors and residents would be able to get out and experience the relevance and significance of preserving the area's resources. The network corridors, which cross all of the area's cultural landscapes and connect to many of the venues, would be preserved.	H Identifies cultural landscapes and differentiates areas of varying character and encourages local entities to preserve these settings. Preservation of key landscapes in the area is a focus of both management and educational experiences.	M Interpretive settings and venues would be preserved, however much of the preservation would rely on encouragement and coordination with City, County, and State entities as well as private land owners.	H The five focus areas encompass varying and unique cultural landscapes of the area and would provide for their enhancement and preservation. The interpretive components of gateways and themed routes also relieve the visitation pressure off of existing interpretive centers and preserved landscapes. The South River and trail corridors would also be preserved and conserved.

Education	<p>L Encouragement of others, especially School Board and existing Interpretive Venues to establish new facilities, innovative curriculums, and other educational opportunities to engage people in the AMHA.</p>	<p>M Interpretive signage would educate the visitor along the trail system. A driving tour distributed on a CD ROM would provide additional direction and information. Tours would be themed so visitors can customize their experience. The route system would also connect to schools and exiting interpretive facilities, allowing perception and knowledge to be experienced as one moves through the area.</p>	<p>M Brands and creates identity for different environments to educate the user on the complexities of the Area's landscapes. The visitor would learn the story of the Heritage Area by experiencing the uniquely different 'places' in the landscape.</p>	<p>M The intent is to educate visitors on four major themes of the Area through experiences and interpretation at four key gateways within the Heritage Area. Each gateway can direct visitors to other interpretive venues within the Clusters. Visitors can customize their learning experience based upon interest, time, and accessibility.</p>	<p>H Visitors are introduced to the heritage area at the visitor center, and are then directed to four other distinct gateways to learn about particular aspects of the area that matches their interests. These gateways occur in distinct environments with signage, educational opportunities, and hands-on activities. An all encompassing historical and cultural account of the area would be provided. The themed route system would offer further educational opportunities and direct visitors to other key interpretive venues and cultural landscapes.</p>
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Economic Development	<p>L</p> <p>The Alliance would have a minor impact on improving the current experience of the visitor to the area. Marketing of the area would be limited due to lack of funding and staff. Venues managed by different entities would pursue different goals. There would exist a lack of unity, priorities and overall identity.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>The Alliance would provide assistance to local entities to extend and complete trails and byways, to provide interpretation en route, to enhance venues on the network, and to develop recreational and educational linkages that build on the network. Economic benefits would stem from recreational and educational opportunities along scenic byways and multi-use trail network.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>Local, County, and State entities would take leadership in landscape preservation, while the Alliance would provide assistance in interpreting these landscapes in a consistent way, reinforcing the sense of identity of the Heritage Area. Guidelines and examples of best practices for each key landscape would be developed. Provisions for technical and financial assistance would be made to local entities to encourage definition and protection of landscape qualities.</p>	<p>M</p> <p>Each interpretive gateway would be the responsibility of a single entity – City of Lithonia, DeKalb County, State DNR, etc. The Alliance would provide financial and technical assistance to these entities and would assist in maintaining linkages between them.</p>	<p>H</p> <p>Each of the five interpretive gateways would be the responsibility of a single entity – City of Lithonia, DeKalb County, State DNR, and Monastery of the Holy Spirit. The Alliance would provide financial and technical assistance to local entities to extend the trails and byways, to provide interpretation en route, enhance venues on the network, and develop recreational and educational linkages.</p>
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Conservation	<p>M Protection and restoration of natural resources would rely on individual public and private entities. Many key historic homes and unique landscapes are currently protected by public and private entities.</p>	<p>M The network would provide an engaging and informative way for visitors and residents to explore and learn about the Area's finite resources. The creation of the network corridor would provide protection to key habitats. The route system would direct and link visitors to unique ecosystems and to new and existing protected land.</p>	<p>H Cultural landscapes would be conserved to convey the dynamic relationship between the culture, history, and landscape of this unique and diverse place.</p>	<p>M Natural, cultural, and historical resource conservation effort would occur within the four clusters and along roadway and trail connections. Much of the conservation would rely on encouragement and coordination with city, county, and state entities as well as private land owners.</p>	<p>H The five focus areas encompass varying and unique cultural landscapes of the area and would provide for their enhancement and preservation. The themed gateways would support a mix of educational opportunities and conservation practices. The South River and trail corridors would also be preserved and conserved.</p>
Recreation	<p>L Alliance would continue its efforts in promoting greenspace protection, but would rely on others to properly plan for and provide both passive and active recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>H The creation of the routes and greenways would create additional protected land and would connect existing greenspace. Additional trailhead facilities and the multi-use trail would provide a place for walkers, runners, bikers, and skaters to recreate and learn.</p>	<p>M The existing and future trails system and roadways would be utilized to connect visitors to the key landscapes of the area. By characterizing the different landscapes, locations for passive and active recreation would be more easily identified and planned.</p>	<p>M Interpretive clusters would be connected by driving tour and walking tour via multi-use trail system. Recreation opportunities would be provided at the gateways via interpretive trails and throughout the area at existing and expanding greenspace with the coordination of local entities.</p>	<p>H The themed walking, driving, and water routes will allow residents and visitors to 'get out and experience' the Area based upon their interests. The three prong route system will provide a 'layering' approach for visitors of all ages to learn about the Area's key features. The routes would also provide a means of connection to greenspace and other recreational opportunities.</p>

<p>Interpretation</p>	<p>L Encouragement of others to interpret the diversity and culture of the area. For example, support others to locate interpretive signage along the existing trail system.</p>	<p>M Strengthen the existing trail and roadway network; build new trails; develop 'hands-on' interpretive experiences along these routes; provide driving and walking tours; provide interpretation along key routes; strengthen interpretation at key venues along routes; customize routes for specific interests; define streetscape standards for key roadways and provide incentives to implement.</p>	<p>M Define the key landscapes – natural, historical, extractive – and the character-defining values of each. Encourage public and private entities by providing technical and financial assistance to them to maintain, enhance, and preserve these landscapes. Develop interpretation at each landscape, using the environmental character and "sense of place" within each to communicate the history and significance of the Heritage Area.</p>	<p>M Select a small number of key sites that best tell the story of the Heritage Area. Create interpretive exhibits and activities at each venue that focus on a specific theme and/or story and also provide an overview of the Heritage Area. Develop self-guided tour routes to connect the venues to one another.</p>	<p>H Initiate interpretation of the area's history and culture at a central visitor's center. This center would be located in the heart of the area and act as the primary gateway into the Heritage Area. Themed walking, driving, and water routes engage visitors to experience all five focus areas with corresponding gateways and associated venues and sites. Themed routes and interpretive gateways will each tell a piece of the Heritage Area's story.</p>	<p>2 7 8 6 12</p>
<p>Total Points (High = 2 points, Medium = 1 point, Low = 0 point)</p>						

2.4 ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The environmentally preferred alternative is the one concept that will promote the national environmental policy as detailed in the National Environmental Policy Act (Section 101 (b)). The following Table 2 compares the ability of each alternative to meet the six NEPA requirements. In the table, a rating of High (2 points) represents a very good potential to meet the requirements versus a rating of Low (0 points) representing a poor potential.

By preserving five different and distinct landscapes,

utilizing gateway facilities to interpret the Heritage Area’s significance, and incorporating other significant venues via a themed network of driving, walking, and water routes, the Alternative 5: Hybrid is the environmentally preferred alternative.

Alternative 5: Hybrid most effectively meets the NEPA requirements. The ability of this alternative to also address the issues associated with the natural, cultural, and socio-economic resources is demonstrated in Table 3 Summary of Indirect and Direct Impacts of Alternatives and in Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences.

Table 2: Comparison of Alternatives to NEPA (Section 101 (b)) Requirements

Source of Point Rating System: Cane River National Heritage Area Draft Management Plan and Environmental Assessment

National Environmental Policy Act (Section 101 (b)) Requirements	ALTERNATIVES				
	1	2	3	4	5
Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations.	M	H	H	H	H
Ensure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and esthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.	L	M	H	M	H
Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk of health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences.	L	M	M	M	H
Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage and maintain, wherever possible, an environment that supports diversity and variety of individual choice.	M	M	H	M	H
Achieve a balance between population and resource use that will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life’s amenities.	L	H	M	H	H
Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.	L	M	H	M	H
Total Points (High = 2 points, Medium = 1 point, Low = 0 point)	2	8	10	8	12

2.5 SUMMARY OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT IMPACTS FOR ALTERNATIVES

Table 3 provides a Summary of Direct and Indirect Impacts for Alternatives. Refer to Section 1.8

Scoping and Issues for an explanation of issues for each impact topic and the measurement methodology used. Section 4.0 Environmental Consequences explains the direct and indirect impacts in more detail and provides Cumulative Impacts.

Table 3: Summary of Direct and Indirect Impacts for Alternatives

IMPACT TOPIC	ALTERNATIVE 1: NO ACTION	ALTERNATIVE 2: NETWORK	ALTERNATIVE 3: AREA	ALTERNATIVE 4: CLUSTER	ALTERNATIVE 5: HYBRID (PREFERRED)
NATURAL RESOURCES					
Topographic and Geological Features	<i>Minor, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to development pressures on non-renewable resource	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increased public awareness and the directing of visitor traffic	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to creating buffers, protecting granite formations, preserving geological ecosystems, and educating visitors on history and use of granite	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increasing visitor knowledge and awareness of resource sensitivity	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increasing public awareness, directing visitor traffic, and relieving pressures of increased visitation on granite formations
Hydrologic Systems/Riparian Corridors and Water Quality	<i>Moderate, Short and Long-Term Adverse Impact</i> due to continued increase in development and resulting water pollutants	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increased public awareness and visitor observation of the impacts of water pollution	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to buffering, enhancing, and preserving riparian corridors and visitor awareness of historical and environmental significance	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to educating and demonstrating to visitors stream and wetland restoration and enhancement	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to restoring, preserving, and buffering of riparian corridors and increased visitor knowledge and awareness of hydrologic systems
Vegetation and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species	<i>Moderate, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to relocation and removal of vegetation and increase in exotic species from the expansion of development and infrastructure	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to educating visitors and controlling foot traffic to protect vegetation communities	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to preservation, protection, and enhancement of diversified ecosystems	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increased public awareness through education, interpretation, and observation of vegetation communities	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to controlling foot traffic, educating visitors, relieving visitation pressures on sensitive ecosystems, and enhancing key ecosystems
Fauna and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species	<i>Moderate, Short and Long-Term Adverse Impact</i> due to increased development that could destroy and inhibit wildlife habitats and water resources	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to educating visitors and directing foot traffic to protect wildlife habitats and resources	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to maintaining, buffering, revitalizing, protecting, and creating wildlife habitats and resources	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to increased public awareness through education, interpretation, and hands on demonstrations	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to controlling visitor impact, relieving visitation pressures on sensitive habitats, educating visitors, and enhancing and protecting wildlife resources

Air Quality	<i>Minor, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to continued development and growth and lack of initiative for alternative transportation	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to providing alternative means of transportation	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to encouraging use of multi-use trail and preserving landscapes that assist in filtering pollutants	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to encouraging use of multi-use trail and clustering uses limiting the need to drive	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to providing and encouraging use of alternative transportation that links key resources
CULTURAL RESOURCES					
Archaeological Resources	<i>Major, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to increased development and lack of initiative for intensive archaeological surveys could cause loss of non-renewable resource	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to interpretation and education on known and potential resources	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to interpretation and preservation of known and high potential sites with resources	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to public awareness through interpretation and education on past generations and cultures	<i>Major, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to a layering approach for education, preservation, and appreciation of key resources and their known and potential locations
Cultural and Historical Resources	<i>Major, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to increased development and lack of programming to protect resources	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to educational programs on preservation and highlighting resources	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to interpretive programs and conservation of historic and cultural landscapes	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to preservation programs and protecting and restoring historic character	<i>Major, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to combined effort of landscape preservation, historic structure and site conservation, and interpretation for visitors
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS					
Recreation/Open Space Resources	<i>Negligible, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to recreational opportunities neither encouraged or discouraged and relying on outside interests to expand recreation and open space	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of existing multi-use trail and greenway system	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to connectivity of multi-use trail system to landscapes that provide recreational opportunities	<i>Negligible, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to connectivity of multi-use trail system and recreational opportunities at gateways	<i>Major, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of existing multi-use trail, greenspace connectivity, and promotion of river and wildlife recreational opportunities

Regional Growth and Land Use Pressures	<i>Minor, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to continued development and growth and lack of sustainable practices	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to providing alternative transportation and expanding greenway corridors	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to reuse of existing structures, connectivity of trail system, and buffering and preserving key landscapes	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of visitor facilities, reuse of existing structures, and connectivity of trail system	<i>Moderate, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of visitor facilities, reuse of existing structures, and providing alternative transportation, and expanding greenway corridors
Tourism	<i>Minor, Long-term Adverse Impact</i> due to lack of marketing and tourism program	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to engaging visitors along trail and driving tour	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to visitor experience and education of diversified landscapes	<i>Minor, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to engaging visitors in educational and hands on activities at gateways	<i>Major, Long-term Beneficial Impact</i> due to expansion of visitor facilities, providing central visitor center, and providing connectivity and tours through driving and walking routes

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area encompasses parts of DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry County in north-central Georgia and lies within the fast growing Atlanta region. The approximately 40,000 acre area includes the City of Lithonia or “Place of Rock” and the smaller communities of Flat Rock, Rock Chapel, and Klondike. The Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and Panola Mountain State Conservation Park with their unique granite formations, along with portions of the South River and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit are also important parts of the Heritage Area. The Heritage Area has close proximity to the east to Historic Conyers, to the west to Soapstone Ridge Historic District and downtown Atlanta, and to the north to Stone Mountain Park.

The resource information below includes and expands upon the preliminary work of the *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. Many resources were used as detailed in the reference section of this plan. The community and Steering Committee provided valuable insight into the Heritage Area’s resources.

3.1 NATURAL RESOURCES

3.1.1 Topographic and Geological Features

Geographic and geologic features of the land are important, character-defining elements and lie at the heart of the culture, people, and landscape of the Heritage Area. The Heritage Area is defined by a landscape of rolling hills and ridges cut by numerous streams. These streams merge to form larger waterways including the South and Yellow Rivers. Most of the landforms in the region relate to underlying bedrock of granite and metamorphic rocks and are part of Georgia’s Piedmont Plateau.

The geology of the Heritage Area involves several forms of granite, granite gneisses, and schists. Some of these rocks are exposed monadnocks and rock outcrops of which the best examples in

Georgia are Arabia Mountain, Panola Mountain, and north of the area Stone Mountain. These unique granite outcroppings represent three of the state’s largest exposed granite occurrences. Nationally, the occurrence of these specific types of granite outcroppings are very rare and do not happen anywhere outside the Piedmont Region. Within the Piedmont Region, these outcroppings only occur in a small percentage of the geological types and within those only a very small percentage of the coverage is actual exposed granite. Granite in this region is younger than granite found in other regions of the country, formed several hundreds of million years ago. Arabia Mountain is the oldest of the three outcroppings at an estimated 475 million years. Its uniqueness also lies in its structural make-up and density due to the mild climactic conditions in Georgia. In addition to the rock outcrops and monadnocks, rock formations can also be observed in the waterways of the Heritage Area. Albert Shoals in the South River and Evans Mill Shoals in Pole Bridge Creek are just two examples of how the rock formations in riparian ways not only create beautiful vistas, but assist in flow turbulence and streambed and bank stability.

Historically, the granite in this Heritage Area has been quarried and utilized around the nation. It has been utilized for its density and high performance in curbing. The stone has also been used in many of the nation’s important buildings including the military service academies at West Point and Annapolis, and reputedly the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C. The Lithonia area continues to be a major source of granite for the metropolitan area. The Rock Chapel, Pine Mountain, and Big Ledge quarries are still in active use. Stone Mountain and Arabia Mountain were early quarry locations, but these sites have been protected by state and county ownership since 1959 and 1973, respectively. Panola Mountain has been protected by state ownership since 1969.

The uneven nature of the outcroppings combined with erosion creates dips and pools that collect rainwater. These are called vernal pools and are home to several types of federally listed rare,

threatened and endangered plant species. Big boulders and pieces broken off from the striation in the granite are part of this landscape. This type of rock outcrop is valued by The Nature Conservancy which has already protected two other outcrops in Georgia; Heggie's Rock, near Augusta, and Camp Meeting Rock, near Carrollton. Both of these outcrops are in rural areas, unlike the Arabia Mountain site, which lies in an area that is under pressure of urban growth and in need of protection. The Arabia Mountain site has been rated by the staff biologist for The Nature Conservancy as one of the top twenty sites in the world for this ecosystem. Refer to Appendix A, Landform Inventory map for locations of topographic and geological features.

3.1.2 Hydrologic Systems/Riparian Corridors and Water Quality

The riparian systems within the Heritage Area are important for greenway and recreation opportunities, cultural and historical resources due to early settlements, wildlife corridors and habitat, and natural resources. According to the National Wetland Inventory, approximately 5.7% of the Heritage Area is emergent, scrub/shrub, and forested wetlands. Wetlands are largely restricted to the bottomland forests of the South and Yellow Rivers and their major tributaries. These are relatively undisturbed areas of forested wetland or scrub-shrub wetland. The abundant stream and river corridor wetlands perform the important ecological functions of flood control, water purification, ground water recharge, and providing wildlife habitat. These functions become increasingly important and valuable as the Heritage Area experiences rapidly increasing rates of development.

The main sub-watersheds of the Heritage Area are the Upper South River and Middle Yellow River, which are part of the Upper Ocmulgee River Basin. Only a small portion of the Heritage Area lies in the Upper Yellow River and the Indian Creek sub-watershed. The divide between the South and Yellow Rivers runs along Stone Mountain Lithonia Road and cuts through the city of Lithonia. Land

use within the sub-watersheds is predominately low and medium density residential and forested/open space, with commercial and industrial areas focused more closely to Lithonia and Interstate 20. The headwaters of the South River do originate in the more densely populated area of metro Atlanta. Development within the South River Watershed is especially on the rise and increases the need to protect the riparian systems and their natural filtration processes.

Water quality in the area has greatly improved since the 1980s; however, most of the waterways do not meet or only partially meet the EPD designation of 'Fishing'. The main point and non-point sources of water pollution in the area are due to urbanization and development, water pollution control plants, combined sewer overflow, poor erosion and sediment control, and urban runoff. There are currently three wastewater pollution control plants along the full length of the South River and two will expand and upgrade if population demand requires. The Pole Bridge Wastewater Pollution Control Plant is located in the Heritage Area. The DeKalb County Water & Sewer Division has produced a South River Watershed Assessment and Management Plan that examines the watershed and makes recommendations for pollution control, restoration, monitoring, implementation, and funding. Federal, especially the AmeriCorps, state, and local agencies have shown support for improving the South River Watershed. In addition, the South River Watershed Alliance has been established and their "mission is to protect and restore the water quality and biodiversity of this watershed to the beneficial use of humans and wildlife". The three counties that encompass the Heritage Area are supporters of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Clean Water Campaign to increase public awareness and education.

The South River is the most significant water feature in the Heritage Area and is the third largest river in the Atlanta Region. The river drains into Jackson Lake located in Newton, Butts, and Jasper Counties and is a major surface water recharge source. The existence of parks and other publicly owned land along the river offers the potential for a

greenway corridor and connecting trails. Panola Mountain State Conservation Park abuts the river on its northern boundary and granite formations create Panola Shoals. Further downstream, at the Everett property, Albert Shoals fall 25 feet in a distance of 300 feet. The northern boundary of South Rockdale Community Park fronts the river and Miners Creek Preserve is on the river. Early mills, farms, plantations, and Native American archeological sites exist all along the South River. The Yellow River has also been significant in the history of both Native American and European settlement of the Heritage Area. Regional historical documents indicate that original settlers farmed, built mills, and traded with Native Americans along the Yellow River near Rock Chapel. A tributary to the South River, Pole Bridge Creek houses the historic Evans Mill and beautiful cascading rock shoals. Other significant tributaries include Stephenson Creek, which originates in the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and Honey Creek that forms the eastern boundary of the Heritage Area. The 6 acre Arabia Lake located in the northwest corner of the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve also has an interesting history. The lake once supplied all of the quarries at Arabia with water, which was piped to an air compressor near the Nature Center building. During the Davidson Granite Companies ownership of the lake, Georgia Tech leased the water body to conduct demolition test for research purposes in conjunction with the Department of Defense. Now the lake supports a variety of flora and fauna. The environment has an amazing way of recovering, but we have to remember that water is a finite resource and needs protection. Refer to Appendix A, Hydrology Inventory map.

3.1.3 Vegetation and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species

Within the AMHA are a wide variety of land cover types. Developed urban and suburban areas are dominating the northern portion of the Heritage Area (north of Interstate 20) centered around the City of Lithonia. The dominant land cover in this

area is high density to low density residential and commercial development. While historic resources are numerous in these areas of long use and development, natural resources are limited to isolated open space and narrow undeveloped riparian corridors associated with the Yellow River, Swift Creek, and Pine Mountain Creek. Upland open space is generally mixed pine hardwood stands while bottomland hardwood forests or mixed hardwood-pine forest dominate the undeveloped stream corridors.

South of Interstate 20 the Heritage Area is significantly less developed. High-density residential and commercial development is much less common south of Interstate 20. The dominant land cover is mixed pine-hardwood forest, pine forest and mixed hardwood-pine forest. Large undeveloped tracts of both public and private land are common in this portion of the Heritage Area. Residential development is primarily low-density single-family houses while commercial development is very limited. A significant portion of the Heritage Area is in pasture, hay field or old-field.

Much of the Heritage Area is in high quality natural vegetation. The dominant habitat types are the upland mixed pine-hardwood forest, upland hardwood forest with scattered pines and the bottomland hardwood forest. The larger areas of intact natural vegetation support the greatest diversity of wildlife species. The riparian bottomland forests provide travel and migration corridors for many species of wildlife. Old-fields, pastures and hayfields are common and scattered throughout the Heritage Area. These habitat types contribute to the overall diversity of plant and animal species of the Heritage Area and are important reminders of humans current and past land-use in the Heritage Area.

The granite outcrops, fields, forests, wetlands, and waterways/bodies in the Heritage Area host a diverse selection of trees, shrubs, mosses, lichens, and flowers that can be enjoyed year round. Some of the flora includes Sunnysbells, Sparkleberry, Yellow Daisy, Fringtree, Georgia Oak, and brilliant

red *Diamorpha*. Within the Heritage Area there are several species of flora endemic to granite outcrops as well as those that are limited to the wetlands ecosystem and the unique habitats found at Arabia and Panola Mountains. These species have adapted to the unique habitat conditions of these granite outcrops and are in need of protection. Many of the species are very fragile, especially when dry, and are susceptible to foot damage. Several species of flora in the Heritage Area already appear on the State and Federal Lists of Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species.

At least 23 species of rare plants likely occur in the Heritage Area. This includes 8 species that are state protected and two species that are federally protected. The two federally protected species are little amphianthus (*Amphianthus pusillus*) and black-spored quillwort (*Isoetes melanospora*). Both of these species are found in shallow water-filled depressions on exposed granite outcrops. These outcrops are extremely important habitats for the diversity of rare plants and animals associated with these outcrops. The permanent protection of these fragile habitats is crucial to the long-term protection of these rare species. Refer to Appendix A, Rare Species and Natural Communities Inventory map. Appendix B contains a list of Flora Species for Arabia Mountain and Panola Mountain and contains a list of rare flora species within the tri-county area. Also contained in Appendix B is a list of protected plant species known to occur or potentially occur in the AMHA and rare species (but not protected) with known occurrences in the AMHA.

The South River Corridor and other riparian ways host an array of mixed pine, hardwood, and bottomland species. Appendix B contains a large list of major vines, shrubs, and trees found in the South River Corridor. Wildflowers are also a common sight to the Heritage Area. Spiderwort and pokeweed are examples of wildflowers found in forested areas, while daylilies, goldenrod, and Queen Anne's lace can be found at the forest edge and in fields. In some areas the invasion of exotic species is an issue and greatly inhibits the survival of native species. The primary invasive species are privet,

Japanese honeysuckle, and kudzu.

3.1.4 Fauna and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species

The diversity of habitats found throughout the Heritage Area allows a wide variety of wildlife to thrive. White tailed deer can be seen crossing rock outcrops, while frogs and salamanders survive and lay eggs in the vernal pools and ponds. The wooded Piedmont area surrounding the rock outcrops provides for water, shade, and shelter for a variety of insects and animals. It takes a tough species to survive the conditions on the outcrops. The 140 degree heat and drought in the summer and the flooding and freezing in the winter would drive many animals away, but these conditions provide a satisfying habitat for others. The Pileated woodpecker, the largest woodpecker in North America is one species that does well on the outcrops. Due to shallow soil depths, drought, and extreme temperatures, pine trees frequently die before their time. Insects move in immediately to feast on the dead and dying wood, providing a smorgasbord for many types of insect eating birds. Cavity-nesting birds also take advantage of holes in the pine trees for nesting and raising young. In addition to woodpeckers, bluebirds, goldfinches, nuthatches, owls and more utilize this habitat.

Some other fauna species in the Heritage Area include bobcats, coyotes, the common nighthawk, Chuck-will's-widow, beavers, lichen grasshoppers, butterflies, and dragonflies. An array of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds utilize the habitat of the riparian corridors, especially the South and Yellow River. The fish habitat in the South River consists mainly of shifting sand and rock shoals that most commonly support bream, bass, and minnows.

Terrestrial Wildlife: The relatively undeveloped condition of the Heritage Area and the diversity of habitat types support a wide variety of terrestrial wildlife. Over 150 species of birds, 49 species of reptiles, 40 species of mammals and 32 species of amphibians have ranges that include the Heritage

Area. Most all of these species are likely found on the Heritage Area at some time during the year. The common terrestrial wildlife most often seen in the Heritage Area includes: white-tailed deer, red fox, coyote, raccoon, cottontail rabbit, gray squirrel, striped skunk, several species of bats, beaver, opossum, chipmunk, many species of perching birds, ducks, Canada goose, herons, barred owl, hawks, and many species of turtles, snakes, frogs and salamanders.

White-tailed deer are common throughout the Heritage Area. While the deer population has remained fairly stable in recent years, conflicts with humans have increased due to the increasing human population in the Heritage Area. As conflicts increase, there will likely be increasing pressure from the public to control the size of the deer population. A number of options are available to control the size of the deer herd in the Heritage Area, but all of the options are very controversial and expensive. Additionally, the success in reducing deer numbers through active management practices is usually very limited.

As many as 30 rare species could be found on the Heritage Area. This includes 5 state protected birds, two of which are federally protected (bald eagle and Bachman's warbler); and two state protected mammals, of which one is federally protected (Indiana bat).

Fisheries: The South River, Yellow River and the many streams within the Heritage Area are home to a relatively diverse and healthy fish population. Over 60 species of fish are likely found in the rivers and streams of the Heritage Area. Six of these species are rare enough that information on the occurrence and status of these species is gathered by natural resource agencies. The goldstripe darter is a state-protected species whose range includes the Heritage Area. While this species has not been collected from the streams of the Heritage Area in recent years, it is believed the higher quality streams in the area may still harbor this species. Fish

common in the streams of the Heritage Area are redbreast sunfish, spotted sunfish, bluegill, bluehead chub, yellowfin shiner, creek chub, striped jumprock, bullhead, largescale stoneroller, speckled madtom, and silverjaw shiner. The most significant threat to the aquatic fauna of these streams is siltation caused by sediment laden stormwater runoff from construction sites.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources provides recommendations on fish consumption based upon fish species and any restrictions in the area are due primarily to PCBs and chlordane. Most of the waterways in the area do not meet or only partially meet their EPD designation of 'Fishing'. The main reasons for water pollution and the destruction of wildlife habitat in the area are due to urbanization and development, water pollution control plants, combined sewer overflow, poor erosion and sediment control, and urban runoff.

In late 2004, the Heritage Area witnessed the ground breaking for the new facilities for the Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (A.W.A.R.E.). A.W.A.R.E. is a non-profit animal rescue and rehabilitation center that is "committed to the preservation and restoration of wildlife and its habitat through education and wildlife rehabilitation". Appendix C contains a list of Vertebrate Wildlife whose range includes the AMHA and a list of Protected animal species known to occur or potentially occurring in the AMHA.

3.1.5 Air Quality

The Heritage Area has close proximity to downtown Atlanta and is considered part of the metro area. Ground level ozone and particulate matter, which can cause serious health and environmental problems, are the air pollutants of most concern for metropolitan Atlanta. These pollutants are two of the six air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act and the EPA. According to established standards, thirteen counties in the Atlanta region are currently designated as a nonattainment area for one-hour

ozone standard and of course will still be in nonattainment when the revised 8-hour ozone standard goes into effect. The three counties that encompass the Heritage Area, DeKalb, Rockdale, and Henry fall within the Atlanta nonattainment area. When the new 2.5 particulate matter designations occur in late 2004 or early 2005, the Atlanta Regional Commission reports that Atlanta will be in nonattainment. Although the particulate matter nonattainment boundary has not been determined, the Georgia EPD recommended boundary would include the Heritage Area.

The variety of sources for ground level ozone and particulate matter include increase in automobiles, heavy diesel engines, power plants, industrial processes, natural processes, and wood burning stoves. Although the population of the Atlanta Region has continued to grow, the air quality has been improving. According to the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) factors that will help to improve air quality will be increased use of alternate transportation, planning that links transportation with land uses, and increasing efficiency of existing transportation and land use infrastructure. While the Georgia EPD continues

to monitor progress, the GRTA is working on establishing measures and targets to combat air pollution. National and State Regulated controls are already in place to improve the air quality.

3.2 Cultural Resources

3.2.1 Archeological Resources

Archeological Overview

Archeologists divide the prehistory of Lower Piedmont province, within which Arabia Mountain is located, into four major time periods, Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian. These are further broken down into subperiods based on changes in arrowhead types, ceramic types, settlement patterns and other technological changes evident in the archaeological record. There are a total of 78 prehistoric sites in the Heritage Area, of which 40 have identifiable components, and 46 sites with historic components. This table gives the names of the prehistoric periods and subperiods, their time spans, and the components or cultural complexes that correspond to them.

Table 4: Archeological Periods, Dates, and Components

Period	Date	Components
Paleoindian	12,000-8,000B.C.	Clovis, Dalton
Early Archaic	8,000-6,000 B.C.	Palmer, Kirk
Middle Archaic	6,000-3,500 B.C.	Stanly, Morrow Mtn., Guilford
Late Archaic	3,500-1,000 B.C.	Savannah River, Otarre
Early Woodland	1,000-100 B.C.	Kellogg
Middle Woodland	100 B.C.-A.D. 500	Cartersville
Late Woodland	A.D. 500-900	Swift Creek
Early Mississippian	A.D. 900-1,200	Woodstock, Averett, Macon Plateau, Etowah
Middle Mississippian	A.D. 1,200-1,300	Savannah
Late Mississippian	A.D. 1350-1550	Lamar

The earliest prehistoric period of Georgia is the Paleoindian. However, no sites dating to this time period are currently known in the Heritage Area. This time period is associated with fluted arrowheads or projectile points, called Clovis points. Paleoindians

focused their settlement strategy on base camps situated in ridge top barrens and in proximity to bottomland swamps and prairies, depending in part on hunting Pleistocene megafauna such as mammoth.

The 19 Archaic Period occupations in the area can be divided into three sub-periods. The Early Archaic appears to be a modification of the preceding Paleoindian Period with a shift to the hunting of more modern large game. The social organization at this level is probably best defined as egalitarian bands who hunted and gathered seasonally available resources within limited geographic areas.

The Middle Archaic Period is differentiated from the Early Archaic by ground stone tools, and by a change in projectile point types, usually made of quartzite. Economic organization probably changed very little from the small hunting bands thought to characterize the Early Archaic and Paleoindian Periods.

The Late Archaic Period saw the transition from a pre-ceramic, hunting-gathering culture to a society whose people produced fiber-tempered ceramics and used horticulture on a limited basis as an addition to their hunting and gathering subsistence strategies. Information concerning the social organization of these people remains largely unknown. However, it is generally believed they lived in small bands within limited geographical areas. This was also the period when soapstone was quarried in nearby Soapstone Ridge and used for cooking stones, later for cooking bowls, and for other items.

The transition from Archaic to Woodland culture in the region is marked by the appearance of sand and grit tempered ceramics, sedentism, and horticulture, while the use of soapstone cooking pots died out. The period as a whole is characterized by increased social complexity, ceremonial activities and a diversified subsistence pattern that relied on small game animals, aquatic life and horticultural products. Diagnostic artifacts include ceramic types, which have a much more localized focus. The 30 sites with occupations in the Woodland Period can be divided into three sub-periods based on ceramic and point types and on the presence or absence of burial mounds.

The Early Woodland Period in North Georgia is not well documented; however, there is growing evidence

that suggests the people of the Early Woodland were less dependent upon agricultural goods than previously thought. These people lived in villages, which were located in floodplains along creeks and streams. In addition to ceramics, other artifacts include grinding stones, perhaps indicative of plant domestication. These people continued to rely on hunting, but at the same time, supplemented their diet by the exploitation of wild plants.

Hunting and gathering still played an important role in the daily economy of Middle Woodland groups, although the presence of large village sites along major rivers and streams suggests an increasing reliance on domesticated plants. During this period the first burial mounds were constructed in North Georgia, indicating increased social complexity and sedentism. The Miners Creek site along the South River, the only intensively studied site in the Heritage Area, belongs to this sub--period.

Evidence suggests that Late Woodland peoples continued to rely heavily on domesticated plants as a subsistence base. This sub period is viewed as the transitional period from a semi-agricultural to a fully-agricultural subsistence base which marks the beginning of the Mississippian Period.

The Mississippian Period is marked by the presence of temple mounds rather than burial mounds and by an agriculturally-based subsistence economy. Mounds are usually located adjacent to or in large stream floodplains and were probably parts of larger villages or towns. Maize and probably other crops were grown by Mississippian people, although hunting and gathering were still part of their economy. One of the major Mississippian sites in North Georgia is the Etowah Mound complex in Cartersville. Cultural markers of this period include stockaded villages, a hierarchical social system, temple mounds, maize agriculture, and a variety of new ceramic and projectile point types. The Late Mississippian culture ended with the appearance of European explorers. Five sites from the Mississippian Period have been recorded for the Heritage Area, but none have mounds.

The Protohistoric Period in Georgia begins with the explorations of three Spaniards, de Soto, de Luna, and Pardo, in the mid-sixteenth century. Hernando de Soto was the only one to visit the Piedmont. De Soto's mission was to find and obtain wealth, especially precious metals. Archeological evidence suggests he may have visited several sites in North Georgia, such as Bullard's Landing, Cowart's Landing, the Lamar site, the Shinholser site, the Shoulderbone site, and the Dyar site, before he left Georgia for South Carolina. He returned to Georgia in the summer of the same year, 1540, and is believed to have visited the province of Coosa in the area now known as the Little Egypt site. He moved on to Itaba, thought to be the Etowah site, and visited the province of Ulibahali near what is now Rome, Georgia, before traveling to Alabama. So far there is no evidence that de Soto or the other early explorers visited the Heritage Area.

There is archeological evidence for the historic occupation of the area from the early nineteenth century until the present. Such historic period sites include farmsteads with their houses, outbuildings, associated activity areas, and slave quarters; granite mining sites in and around Lithonia and Arabia Mountain; town lots in Lithonia; unmarked and marked cemeteries; and industrial and commercial sites, to name a few. Such sites can offer much historical information on the daily lives of people who otherwise left no mark in the historic record, but nevertheless made up the majority of the population. Understanding the undocumented daily lives of these people, prehistoric and historic, should be a goal of the archaeological research in the Heritage Area.

Current Research in the Heritage Area

Two preliminary tasks have been completed for the Heritage Area, archaeological background research and a geographic information system (GIS) to help manage the cultural resources within the Heritage Area. The background research included a search for historic maps, historic structures and archaeological sites at the Georgia State Archives and History where their map collection was examined for relevant items; collection of historic soil maps and early county highway maps from the historic map collection at the Science Library of the University of Georgia;

examination of the state archaeological site files at the State Historic Preservation Office and University of Georgia where copies were made of the relevant site forms and cultural resource reports; and examination of the archives at the DeKalb Historical Society. Finally, a day was spent talking to local residents who were invited to share their information with project archaeologists and historians, and who volunteered family photographs and their own knowledge of sites located throughout the Heritage Area.

Geographic data were collected within a rectangle in UTM Zone 16 South bounded by Northings 3715000 and 3743000 and Eastings 758000 and 776000 to insure that data would be collected for the current and any future expansions in the proposed Heritage Area limits. A bibliography that includes all known reports within and adjacent to the proposed Heritage Area was also completed.

The Heritage Area contains 101 previously recorded archaeological sites and 12 sites noted during oral history interviews with residents for a total of 113 sites currently known in the Heritage Area. There were 85 sites in DeKalb County, 24 in Rockdale County, and two each in Gwinnett and Henry Counties. Since very little intensive archaeological survey has been conducted in the Heritage Area and it contains a major river and various third and fourth rank streams, there is a high likelihood that the total number of sites is many times that known today.

In order to keep from having to survey the entire 40,000 acre (approx.) Heritage Area, a prohibitively expensive exercise, a site probability model was developed. It was felt that the area requiring intensive survey could be cut to perhaps a third of the entire Heritage Area which would significantly reduce costs, while at the same time meet obligations under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Using the information collected from professional surveys in and near the Heritage Area, as well as all National Register eligible sites found within the Lower Piedmont geophysical province, two models of site probability were developed, one for prehistoric sites, based primarily on slope and hydrography; and one for historic sites, based primarily on slope and historic road locations. These models are represented by layers in the GIS and will be refined as more information on site occurrence in the Heritage Area is obtained.

The models do not account for the abnormal, non-habitation site. Such sites can be located in nearly any topographic location and might be used for quarrying stone for arrowheads, religious ceremonies, hunting stations, rock art, or for one of many other uses. No probability model can insure that it will always find every site. So while the model can “red flag” certain areas and single them out for intensive investigation in the planning process, a less intensive level of investigation will also be needed to check that other specialized sites are not present in future project areas.

The Heritage Area has been occupied for at least the last 6,000-8,000 years and possibly much longer. While 113 sites have been recorded in the Heritage Area, few intensive, professional archaeological surveys have been conducted, indicating that there are many more prehistoric and historic sites yet undiscovered. To avoid unintentionally impacting these non-renewable resources and to provide information with which to study the every day life of the people who have lived here, the undiscovered sites need to be found and managed within a well thought out framework. Appendix A contains the Historical and Archeological Inventory map showing the location and potential locations of prehistoric and historic archeological sites.

3.2.2 Cultural and Historical Resources

From the Pre-historic to the Modern Era the unique geological and riparian resources of the Heritage Area and the surrounding area have been intimately linked to human settlement and activity. The Heritage Area has experienced the settlement of Native Americans, African Americans, and Europeans as evidenced by archeological sites along river corridors, historic granite structures throughout Lithonia and Klondike, cemeteries and churches from Flat Rock to the Monastery to downtown Lithonia and early farm, mill, and quarry locations throughout the Heritage Area. Historic and archeological features consist of former mill locations, early farms and plantations, civil war sites, sites associated with Native American and African American culture, cemeteries, and historic homes, retail stores, clubs, barns, schools, and religious structures. The Lyon’s Home within DeKalb

County and the Parker home on the Southernness Property in Rockdale County are the oldest homes within their respective county and are located in the Heritage Area along the South River. The Seminary in downtown Lithonia is the only site within the Heritage Area on the National Register of Historic Places; however, numerous historic features are identified for DeKalb County in the Georgia Historic Resources Survey by the Historic Preservation Division of Georgia DNR and for Rockdale County in the Rockdale County Historic Resources Survey. The sites listed in these documents within the Heritage Area are listed in Appendix D. In addition the Klondike Historic District, which incorporates historic structures in the vicinity of Klondike and South Goddard Roads has been approved. The Historic Preservation Department at Georgia State University has been involved in researching and compiling historic information on the City of Lithonia. They have completed Historic District Nomination Forms for three Proposed Lithonia Historic Districts. The districts would encompass approximately 80% of the Lithonia Community. The Georgia State Historic Preservation Department also coordinated with FLAAC (Friends of the Lithonia African American Cemeteries) to produce the *Lithonia African American Cemetery* history book. Appendix D lists the structures within the Klondike and Proposed Lithonia Historic Districts.

Information on archeological sites within the Heritage Area has been documented, but much of this information needs to be field verified. An archeological report has been completed for Miner’s Creek Native American Site along the South River and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Rockdale County has a collection of various Native American artifacts. Reports also exist on the location of mills along the South and Yellow River and their tributaries and former quarries on the monadnocks and large granite outcrops. Remnants of Evan’s Mill are preserved along Pole Bridge Creek and portions of the old Arabia Mountain Quarry Office still remain. In addition, one of the most intriguing sites in the Heritage Area is the pastoral landscape, old barn, and granite house at Vaughters’ Farm.

The farm is located close to Interstate 20 off of Klondike Road and is preserved by Georgia DNR. Refer to Appendix A Historical & Archeological Inventory map for locations of key features within the Heritage Area.

Pre-European History

Evidence suggests that humans first lived in this region about 10,000 years ago during the Paleoindian Period (13000 BC - 7900 BC), when early nomadic peoples traveled the waterways to gather, fish and hunt. The region was densely forested and presumably rich in wildlife. Throughout the Archaic Period (8000 BC - 1000 BC), indigenous people developed tools of increasing sophistication, along with agricultural techniques that allowed for a sedentary lifestyle.

During the Archaic Period, indigenous people settled in Soapstone Ridge along the South River, making it an early site of trade and commerce. Archeologists have identified more than 110 sites along Soapstone Ridge containing various artifacts. Soapstone was initially used to make cooking utensils, bowls, tools and ornaments, and was an important product for trade.

Soapstone was plentiful and easy to work, yet difficult to transport. When ceramic pottery developed along the Savannah River in South Georgia around 2500 BC, it gradually replaced the use of soapstone to make bowls. In the Heritage Area, we believe this transition prompted people to leave Soapstone Ridge for sites more conducive to agriculture.

During the Woodland (200 BC - 900 AD) and Mississippian Periods (900 AD - 1700 AD), villages were generally located on higher ground, overlooking waterways. Settlement sites from these periods have been located along the Yellow River near Lithonia. On the South River, Miners Creek Preserve contains evidence of settlement spanning 400 years during the "Panola Phase" of the Middle Woodland Period.

Our knowledge of Native American culture in the

Heritage Area is limited to oral tradition, known artifacts and written observations by early European travelers and settlers. When early European settlers arrived, Native American culture in the region was divided between the Cherokee and Creek nations. Land that today comprises DeKalb, Henry and Rockdale counties was largely Creek territory, yet sparsely inhabited. This landscape was regarded as a buffer and hunting zone between the two cultures. Native American settlement remains evident today in the existence of footpaths, still visible, dating from the pre-European era, as well as archeological sites and soapstone quarries. Browns Mill and other roads are examples of trails being adopted as part of the contemporary roadway and rail system.

Early Settlement to the Civil War

Most documented European history for North Georgia dates to the late 18th century. European settlement had an extreme impact on Native American cultures, whose populations dropped dramatically from exposure to foreign diseases, and involvement in wars with the English, Spanish and French. Early Europeans initially settled north of the future site of Atlanta along the Chattahoochee River. Settlement increased tremendously in the Heritage Area after 1821 when Creek Indians ceded a large land tract to the State of Georgia that encompassed present-day DeKalb, Henry and Rockdale counties. Land lots were distributed by lottery to qualified settlers such as the Lyon family. Initially, early settlers followed Native American trails to travel through the region, yet the influx of settlers required construction of roads and rail.

James Diamond, the first surveyor in DeKalb County, reportedly moved to Rock Chapel in 1820. Thus, Rock Chapel at Rock Mountain became the first European community in the Heritage Area. Another early community known as Cross Roads evolved at the junction of two major roads. In 1856, it was chartered and renamed Lithonia. In 1845, a rail line linked Marthasville (an early name for Atlanta) to Augusta on the Savannah River through the area that would be known as Lithonia.

African-American Experience

The Heritage Area is also rich in early African-American history. Former slaves remained in the vicinity and others were drawn there in search of farmland. The community of Flat Rock is one of the oldest African-American settlements in Georgia, dating back to 1820, and one of the oldest African-American cemeteries in the state still exists there. The grave of U.S. serviceman Lucious Sanders, who founded the Lithonia Civic League in the 1940s to promote voting rights, lies in the Lithonia African-American cemetery.

Agriculture and Mills

Not long ago, there were more than 50 dairy farms in DeKalb County, which was known as the dairy farm capital of Georgia. Today, Vaughters' Farm has been preserved as the last remaining dairy farm landscape, providing an excellent educational tool to share this lifestyle with future generations.

Throughout the 19th century, the Heritage Area remained largely agricultural. Another fine example of agricultural living during this time is evident at the Lyon family home, spared by Sherman's troops, and the oldest continuously occupied structure in the Heritage Area, circa 1823. The Klondike community was named in the 1830s in hopes that gold would be found. Instead, farming became the staple business. As the Heritage Area was settled, many mills were built along creeks and rivers, using water power to grind grains and mill cotton. Though a complete mill structure does not exist today, the legacy lives on in names such as Browns Mill, Evans Mill and McDaniels Mill roads. By 1860, Georgia ranked fourth among the states in cotton production, though cotton production peaked in the South in the late 1800s. Cotton remained, however, the most important agricultural product until the end of the century, when granite quarrying on a large scale developed.

Granite's Role in the Heritage Area

The success of the granite quarrying industry had a lasting impact. From the 1880s to 1920s, the industry flourished from new technologies and increasing demand. The expanding railroad system

facilitated industrial production and transportation of granite. The use of dynamite enabled efficient quarrying and allowed large slabs to be separated intact. Another development, the steam drill, was first used around 1883 to facilitate granite production. The most successful quarry district included Stone Mountain, Lithonia and Conyers, located in western Rockdale County. While other parts of Georgia also developed around the quarry industry, the Lithonia-Stone Mountain-Conyers district remained the most productive.

Lithonia granite was superior because it withstood weathering, was harder than other types and retained its color and pattern. Compared to Stone Mountain granite located farther north, Lithonia granite was easier to quarry and more readily split. According to the Cultural Resources Report for Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Lithonia granite is similar to granite found only in Russia and Norway. Lithonia granite was used throughout the U.S. including at the West Point Academy, the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, state and federal offices in Atlanta, reportedly for the foundation of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., the Brooklyn Bridge and other structures throughout New York City. It was also widely used as "Belgian" paving blocks in streets across the nation. The peak use of this type of granite spanned the 1890s to the 1920s.

Quarries in the Heritage Area were known by names such as Big Ledge, Arabia Mountain, Pine Mountain and Rock Chapel. Many families began quarries around Lithonia, and large quarrying companies later acquired these smaller operations. Both the Davidson and Venable families were prominent in the quarrying business, operating quarries in Lithonia. The granite industry attracted skilled immigrants from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Scandinavia and Italy, as well as African-Americans who migrated to Lithonia after the Civil War.

The thriving granite industry helped Lithonia develop both economically and culturally. New streets and homes were built, and granite details and architecture became a distinctive feature of the

downtown. One of Lithonia's most prominent buildings, originally known as The Seminary, is on the National Register of Historic Places and is currently under renovation. Other well-known granite structures include a Masonic lodge chartered in 1849 and the Lithonia Woman's Club building.

The Great Depression ended quarrying operations at Arabia Mountain and slowed production at Big Ledge and Pine Mountain, both Davidson family businesses. The family survived the Depression by inventing new uses for granite and expanding into other products. For example, in the 1920s, innovative methods were used to isolate minerals from granite, enabling portions to be used for applications ranging from pottery and glass production to agriculture. Granite aggregates were used as poultry grit, a food supplement to help chickens digest corn. Later, crushed stone from the Big Ledge quarry was used for road construction, while the Pine Mountain quarry became a source for finished stone.

The Heritage Area Today

After World War II, DeKalb County communities were strongly impacted by Atlanta's booming economy and urban growth, and Lithonia's granite industry made a comeback. While this period was productive socially and economically, a darker side of history was always present. Beginning in the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan had become active again in the Atlanta area, burning crosses on nearby Stone Mountain. However, Lithonia's African-American community flourished. Popular gathering spots such as the Lithonia Speedway and the Lithonia Country Club opened in the 1940s, and boasted musical acts such as B.B. King and James Brown. Lucious Sanders, an African-American activist and veteran, challenged racial discrimination by forming the Lithonia Civic League in the 1940s.

During this time, the character of the Heritage Area transformed from a largely rural landscape to one with a more suburban character. This change rose from the decline of the quarry industry and the influx of residential and commercial development. From 1970 to 1990, DeKalb County reported the

third largest population increase in the United States. Before this population surge, DeKalb County created the Parks and Recreation Department in 1953 to provide recreational opportunities and manage open spaces. The State of Georgia purchased Stone Mountain in 1959, establishing Georgia's largest granite outcrop as a recreational park and tourist destination. Panola Mountain State Park was created by the State of Georgia Department of Natural Resources in 1969 and designated as a National Natural Landmark in 1980. Arabia Mountain was gifted to DeKalb County by the Davidson family, and designated as the Davidson-Arabia Nature Preserve in 1992.

Today, the Heritage Area experiences increased pressures of residential and commercial growth. The Mall at Stonecrest, developed in the late 1990s, has brought an influx of new residents and retail services, and will remain a catalyst for future economic development in DeKalb and Rockdale counties. Multi-family housing, single-family subdivisions and retail establishments dot the landscape surrounding the mall. This growth has brought added demands on infrastructure and services for existing residents. Communities are actively working with the counties to determine appropriate measures for retaining the Heritage Area's high quality of life through the Arabia Alliance's efforts including this Plan.

Recreational and educational improvements have enhanced the Heritage Area in the 21st century. At the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, PATH Foundation has completed eight miles of paved walking and bike trails throughout the Nature Preserve, creating a continuous linear park from the City of Lithonia to Arabia Mountain and on to Panola Mountain. These attractive trails wind through a variety of landscapes including Vaughters' Farm, forests, wetlands and granite outcrops. Planned additions to the trail system include connecting along the South River to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, the largest contiguous greenspace in Rockdale County.

In the near future, one of the most significant

additions will be an environmental high school built by DeKalb County Public Schools. The actual building, as well as the curriculum, will actively engage students in environmental studies with emphasis on natural systems found in the Heritage Area. The site is connected to the PATH trail system.

Another Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve innovation will be a future development to cluster a public library, police station and fire station together, directly along the PATH trail. Normally, these community amenities are separate. By locating them together in one place, all three become more accessible to the public. School groups can more easily enjoy tours of the fire station; young and old can walk or bike to the library; the trails will be used by police and fire fighters.

In 2004, Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE) opened on Klondike Road and has become a trusted source for protecting wildlife and their habitat. Through an active environmental education and animal rescue program, AWARE (www.awareone.org) has saved hundreds of birds and animals in the Heritage Area.

Three fulltime rangers are now employed at Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve by the DeKalb County Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, the relocated historic Ragsdale home will soon be restored, and expanded parking and trailhead facilities have recently been added to the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve.

Recognizing the importance of Panola Mountain State Park to the metropolitan Atlanta, the Georgia Parks and Historic Sites Division has created a new park master plan that will introduce outdoor recreation, environmental education and sustainable stewardship to millions of Georgia citizens and visitors. The Division is pursuing additional property acquisitions to buffer existing park property, protect the natural landscape, expand the opportunity for recreational developments and connect the park to Rockdale County properties downstream along the South River. The park

master plan calls for reorienting the park entrance, creating expanded day-use and family activity areas, developing overnight camping areas, expanding hiking and walking trails, wildlife viewing areas, river access points, and stabilizing and restoring the historic Parker Home. The master plan also includes the development of an environmentally sustainable outdoor recreation educational center which could house the Division's state headquarters offices. See Appendix G for the Panola Mountain State Park master plan.

Recent increases in the number of recreational amenities has laid the groundwork to create popular attractions for Atlanta-area residents and families seeking activities in nature, all in close proximity to where they live.

3.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

3.3.1 Recreation/Open Space Resources

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area covers a wide variety of natural and open space resources and spans three counties, the eastern portion of DeKalb County, western Rockdale County, and northern Henry County. The resources prevalent in this Heritage Area provide an exceptional opportunity for recreation, education, and heritage preservation, all within a 20 minute drive from downtown Atlanta. Containing the last semi-rural areas of DeKalb County and fast developing Rockdale and Henry Counties, the region of this proposed National Heritage Area is home to several significant open space resources. The open space resources are listed below and identified in Appendix A on the Recreation Inventory map.

State

Panola Mountain State Conservation Park – Established in 1969, this park is approximately 1,118 acres and includes a designated National Landmark, the 100-acre monadnock, Panola Mountain. The mountain's

ecology is largely intact, including fragile lichens and mosses. The park is managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, is open to the public, and includes natural interpretation as well as passive recreation facilities.

Alexander Estate (part of Panola Mountain State Conservation Park) – This estate was recently acquired in 2002 and includes approximately 260 acres of a picturesque open landscape with a large lake. Through the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Expansion, this estate will house day-use activities, extensive hiking trails, overnight camping, and Park Visitor Center.

Parker Estate (part of Panola Mountain State Conservation Park) – The newly purchased property last year is the former location of the Southerness Golf Course. The estate encompasses approximately 167 acres and contains the Parker Home, the oldest home in Rockdale County. Through the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Expansion, this site will contain the Georgia State Park Education & Demonstration Facility, as well as the opportunity to observe stream and native plant restoration.

Vaughters' Farm – Located north of Arabia Mountain, this farm was the last working farm in DeKalb County. The 141 acre farm was purchased by the state in 2002 and is managed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The farm presents a striking view from Klondike Road and contains an old barn and the Vaughters' granite home.

DeKalb County

Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve – Established in 1973, the heart of the preserve is comprised of 535 acres of granite outcrops with wetlands, pine and oak forests, streams, and a lake. Through the efforts of the Alliance numerous properties contiguous to the nature preserve totaling over 2000 acres have been preserved.

Everett Property North – The 41 acre property was purchased in 1997, with an additional 27 acres from

Chestnut Lake obtained in 2004. The site is adjacent to the South River at the location of Albert Shoals and contains cultural, historical, and environmental resources. Canoe access is a potential; however, the site has difficult road access.

Miners Creek Preserve – This site, along the South River, is a 73 acre area that contains documented evidence of early human settlement activities, including remains of early mining activities. Archeological studies have shown usage of the site as early as 5000 years ago, establishing this as an archeologically significant site that should be further explored. Miners Creek was established in 1977 and an additional 19 acres was obtained in 2004 to potentially provide access into the site.

Lyon's Estate – This 90 acre estate recently obtained in 2004 includes the oldest home in DeKalb County. The site provides magnificent views to the South River and to Panola Mountain. Plans are underway to connect the multi-use Path trail from the Murphey Candler Elementary School through the Lyon's Estate and then across the South River. The site also has the potential to provide canoe access.

Rock Chapel Park – This 20 acre park includes baseball, softball, playground, and picnic areas. The park also has youth sports programs.

Union Grove Park

DeKalb County Adjacent To Heritage Area

Yellow River North – This 18 acre park is a natural area along the Yellow River.

Yellow River South – This 1.8 acre park is a natural area along the Yellow River.

Henry County

Wolf Rock – Recently established in 2003, this 66.2 acre site contains a large granite outcrop.

Rockdale County

Decastro Nature Preserve – The site was obtained in 1996 and includes 100 acres. The estate includes a pedestrian suspension bridge that will be a part of the future trail system along the South River corridor.

Everett Property South – This 44 acre site along the South River was obtained in 1998. The site contains cultural, historical, and environmental resources including mill foundations, distillery remnants, several old cemeteries, and historic bridge remnants. Canoe access is a potential.

South Rockdale Community Park – The 176 acre community park established in 1991 includes a mile long nature trail along the South River and picnic facilities.

City of Lithonia

Bruce Street Park – This 4 acre park includes multi-use field and court, basketball court, playground, and picnic areas.

Kelly Park – This is a small pocket park in the heart of Lithonia. It is located next to the only site in the Heritage Area on the National Register of Historic Places, ‘The Seminary’.

Lithonia Community Park – Multi-use field and court, basketball court, swimming pool, playground, picnic area, and trails are all a part of this 53 acre park.

Lucious Sanders Park – This 2 acre site contains a recreation center and a playground. The site offers youth sports programs.

The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance has been focusing on linking publicly owned greenspace, other publicly owned land, and schools into an area wide greenway network to provide recreational opportunities and to protect the unique features of the Heritage Area. The additional open space will provide increased buffering for existing sensitive park/open land. Through the efforts of

the Alliance numerous properties contiguous to the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve totaling over 2000 acres have been preserved. Additional properties along the South River have been obtained in an effort to connect the existing greenspace into a South River Greenway Corridor. The involvement and continued coordination of the Alliance with the Path Foundation, the Counties, the State, and private land owners is key to the continued effort in creating greenway corridors.

Planned trails are also a major element in the linkage of the open space and cultural resources. Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and Panola Mountain State Conservation Park contain trails and guided tours that focus on bird watching, plant identification, wildflowers, sunset walks, moonlight tours, and educational walks with school children. The Path Foundation out of Atlanta has created a master plan of multi-use trails for DeKalb County and connecting trails along the South River to Rockdale County, Henry County, and up to Atlanta. The completed portion of trails within the Heritage Area moves south from the Lithonia Woman’s Club into the Stonecrest Mall development. Then the trail connects to the Vaughters’ Farm land along Klondike Road and links down to Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve. Once in the preserve, the trail proceeds south to Murphey Candler Elementary School and the location of the Future Environmental School at Arabia Mountain. The completed trail features several new arched granite bridges, wooden boardwalks and bridges, a short segment over rock outcroppings, and a covered bridge over Stephenson Creek. Rock outcroppings the size of football fields, streams rushing over woodland waterfalls, hundred acre farms, and fields of wildflowers undulating in the breeze can be observed along the trail.

A future loop trail is proposed to connect from the Arabia Mountain Nature Center east toward Honey Creek and north up to the Stonecrest Mall development. Through the coordination of Path, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, the Georgia DNR, and consultants plans are being

developed to locate a trail from Murphey Candler Elementary School to the Lyon's Estate with DeKalb's oldest home and down to the South River and Panola Mountain State Conservation Park. Future trails are to run northwest and southeast along the South River to provide access to South Rockdale Community Park, the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, and Miners Creek. Path and its public and private sector cooperators intend to design, build, and maintain all trails along the waterways in the most environmentally sensitive way so as not to damage the riverbanks or water quality. To the north, closer to I-20 and Lithonia, future trails will provide access to Stone Mountain Park via Stone Mountain Lithonia Road. The community has expressed interest in both paved and soft surface trails.

3.3.2 Regional Growth and Land Use Pressures

The population of the ten-county Atlanta region has more than doubled over the period between 1970 and 1999, from approximately 1.5 million to 3.2 million residents. As of April 2004, the population was 3,716,100. In the last decade the average rate of regional population growth has been 3% per year. As stated in the Atlanta Regional Commission's Regional Development Plan, "If the land consumption rate experienced between 1995 and 2000 continues during the next two decades, 600,000 acres will be developed to accommodate just over one million new residents. The land consumed by this rate of .542 acres per person equals the land area of Cherokee, Douglas, and Fayette counties." The following Table 5 shows key growth characteristics for the region and the counties within the Heritage Area.

DeKalb County has a diverse population and is generally growing at a slower rate than the entire region largely because of lack of developable land. However, the part of the county, which includes the Arabia Mountain area, is growing at a faster rate than the rest of the county. DeKalb County has the highest density of any county in the Heritage Area and the region, increasing the development

pressure on the last remaining open space areas around Arabia Mountain. Rockdale and Henry Counties have relative low densities of development, substantially below the regional average. However, Henry County leads the region in rate of population growth and is experiencing one of the highest rates of growth in the nation, with substantial new development over the last decade.

Growth pressures have resulted in new housing, retail, and office developments throughout the Atlanta region, absorption of open lands by new developments, and traffic overload and periodic gridlock on regional highways and arterials. In many ways, the interest in open space preservation and protection of the area around Arabia Mountain has been prompted by recognition that there is a narrow window of opportunity to retain open lands, to encourage "Smart Growth" and sustainable environmental planning, and to protect important resources before land costs and the economics of development make such initiatives impossible. The Heritage Area is in the path of rapid development, located at the nexus between the denser urban core of the region and counties with relatively more open land. Development pressures are felt increasingly on the remaining open lands and on resources associated with settings such as Arabia Mountain. The construction has been completed for Stonecrest, a new regional super mall that will be surrounded by mixed uses, adjacent to I-20 between Lithonia and Arabia Mountain. Another new development, the New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, consists of a several hundred-acre campus facility for 23,000 members, including a church building, schools, and retirement homes. This new mall and related new developments will have direct impacts on the surrounding communities. Without great care in planning for future transportation, community facilities, infrastructure, housing patterns, and non-residential development these new developments will pose a risk to the overall quality of this Heritage Area and may overwhelm its natural and historical assets.

Table 5: Key Growth Indicators

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

	Atlanta Region	DeKalb County	Rockdale County	Henry County
Population 2004	3,716,100	695,100	75,100	156,300
Average Annual Percentage of Population Increase from 2000-2004	2.0	1.1	1.7	7.0
Average Annual Percentage of Population Increase from 1990-2000	3.0	1.9	2.6	7.3
Land Area (acres)	1,907,864	171,617	83,403	206,531
Population Density 2004 (people/acre)	1.95	4.05	0.90	0.76
Total Housing Units 2004	1,511,689	285,668	28,314	59,824
Average Annual Change in Housing Units 2000-2004	45,106	6,109	808	4,165
Average Annual Change in Housing Units 1990-2000	27,883	2,971	512	2,189

To promote a balance between growth and protection, efforts have been made by the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, the counties, Lithonia, and the Stonecrest Mall developer to form a “Smart Growth” initiative known as GRASP (Greater Arabia Stonecrest Plan.) It is believed that the new mall and the Heritage Area can co-exist and mutually benefit with proper planning. Working toward these goals, GRASP has actively held large-scale meetings to bring together key players on issues such as transportation and watershed management. The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance is a volunteer organization with the mission to ensure that recreational, natural, and historical resources of Arabia Mountain and its environs are protected, connected by greenway corridors and well managed to provide citizens and future generations the opportunity to enjoy this magnificent feature of Georgia’s heritage. The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance seeks to set a national standard for “Smart Growth” in its approach to the development, conservation and preservation of Arabia Mountain and its surrounding lands. The Alliance has succeeded in gathering environmentalists, developers, politicians, and community members into a uniquely

cooperative organization, dedicated to preserving several thousand acres of pristine wilderness in the heart of Atlanta’s next big expansion area, while promoting the harmonious development of that area into thriving communities.

Other initiatives to promote smart growth include the Livable Centers Initiative planning grant from the Atlanta Regional Commission and Smart Growth Design Protocol prepared by the Smart Growth Leadership Institute and the University of Southern California for the City of Lithonia, and the Stonecrest Area Study by Rockdale County. These studies are comprised of recommendations and implementation strategies for revitalization, economic growth, design standards, and enhancement of community character.

3.3.3 Tourism

The information in this section provides excerpts and summary of the research work done by the Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute under the direction of Dr. Rich Harrill. The full document is entitled *Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area: Opportunities for Tourism Development*.

Other National Heritage Areas

According to the National Park Service, a Heritage Area is a region in which residents, businesses, and governments join together to preserve, promote, and celebrate their heritage, culture, and natural resources to benefit current and future generations. Congress has designated 27 National Heritage Areas around the country where conservation, interpretation, and heritage tourism activities are planned and implemented through partnership among federal, state, and local government, residents, and the private sector. It is important for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area's constituents and leadership gain knowledge of tourism marketing and development in the other National Heritage Areas. Dr. Rich Harrill with Georgia Tech Economic Development Institute conducted telephone interviews with directors and representatives of 24 National Heritage Areas on the topic of tourism marketing and development. The interviews resulted in the following key factors for success and advice for Heritage Areas.

Factors for Success:

- Attain local support/interest/participation
- Develop and maintain partnerships
- Embrace a preservation ethic
- Gain congressional/political support
- Send clear and consistent messages
- Provide economic development
- Attract visitors/increasing tourism

Advice:

- Be able to achieve a distinctive identity
- Garner grassroots support
- Develop and maintain partnerships
- Invest in planning process
- Emphasize storytelling
- Budget for tourism

There is a lack of tourism research for National Heritage Areas, attributed mainly to expense and too many entry points that are often far apart to collect valid and reliable data on visitation and economic impact. The National Heritage Area

Alliance did contract with researchers at Michigan State University to produce a report, *Economic Impacts of National Heritage Areas: Summary Results from Seven National Heritage Area Visitors Survey* (2004). The survey evaluated local residents, day trips from outside the local area, and overnight trips involving stays in local motels or with friends and relatives for seven National Heritage Areas, based on 25,000 annual visitors. The direct impacts of spending were \$780,000 in wages and salaries, 1.2 million in value added and 51 jobs.

Ultimately, the economic future of a National Heritage Area depends upon a series of decisions concerning economic development and tourism. Failure to create a coherent narrative concerning the importance of the Heritage Area to America's history and development can result in the creation of ineffective marketing materials. Once produced, these marketing materials must find the right outlets targeting the type of tourism most likely to visit the Heritage Area. Traditionally, these materials have included maps and brochures, but the Heritage Areas are increasingly investing in websites and information kiosks. Adequate signage remains important in directing visitors around the Heritage Area. Tourism development is another important part of the equations. There should be enough physical development to attract visitors, yet not so much that the building and maintenance of these facilities become a burden to the national Heritage Area's limited budget. Conservative investment in a visitors center, museum, and perhaps a few local renovations undertaken with partners often suffices. With careful choices, a National Heritage Area can become an important economic engine for a city or region.

Arabia Mountain Heritage Area

The Atlanta Metropolitan Area is well-known as a destination for conferences and sports tourism. However, for the region to remain viable in the increasingly competitive tourism industry, it must diversify its current product to attract other promising market niches. The Arabia Mountain

Heritage Area, a short drive from downtown Atlanta, has great potential to attract visitors interested in nature, culture, and heritage. Increased visitation to the Heritage Area can translate into substantial economic benefits for DeKalb, Henry, and Rockdale counties and their respective municipalities.

A few of the tourism assets the Heritage Area offers include Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Panola Mountain State Conservation Park, the South River, historic buildings and quarries, Native American sites, greenway linkages, and agricultural land. A proposed bike path to Stone Mountain Park will also help in building regional tourism linkages. As a nationally recognized contributor to “smart growth” in the region, Arabia Mountain Heritage Area tourism can play a dual role in stimulating economic development while preserving quality of life and sense of place. Many of the potential liabilities or eyesores of the Heritage Area are reasonably well buffered; however, area tourism developers need to remain vigilant to developments that threaten or degrade the physical appearance of the landscape, and act to prevent or buffer them when possible. Both a curse and a blessing to the development of the Heritage Area, I-20 brings thousands of travelers through the region each day. The key to increased visitation will be convincing travelers along I-20 that despite appearance, the Heritage Area has significant natural and historic assets worthy of a stop.

Lifestyle analysis can be a means of targeting specific Arabia Mountain Heritage Area tourism niches, given that surveying current visitors can be expensive. To most efficiently and effectively target marketing efforts in Heritage Area, it is crucial to understand the nature of visitors there. Their needs, desires, attitudes, and perceptions should be carefully considered when creating a marketing campaign and undertaking product development. The nature of these various visitor segments will dictate where print advertising is placed, the content of that advertising, and the appearance and content of all collateral marketing materials such as brochures, signs, maps, and visitors’ guides. A

PRIZM analysis was used to develop lifestyle clusters related to the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area tourism. PRIZM NE is a neighborhood lifestyle segmentation system developed from such sources as the U.S. Census, and it works because of the adage “birds of a feather flock together.” People with similar cultural backgrounds, needs, and perspectives naturally gravitate toward each other. TRACS researchers identified visitors through sources indicated as important by the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance and Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The PRIZM NE market segmentation system was used for over 8,000 reservations from 1995 to 2005 for Panola, Providence, Smithgall, Sweetwater, and Tallulah Georgia state parks, all sharing a conservation theme. The top markets for Arabia Mountain Heritage Area are described below.

- Beltway Boomers
 - In their 40s and 50s, college educated, married late in life, upper middle-class, and home-owning, raising children in suburban subdivisions.
 - Median household income: \$69,830
 - Suburban
 - High Asian, Hispanic
 - Read computer magazines, *Business Week*, *Golf Digest*, *Golf Magazine*, *Working Mother*, *Black Enterprise*
- Fast-Track Families
 - Upper middle-class incomes, numerous children, spacious homes, prime acquisition years; buy latest computer technology
 - Median household income: \$70,216
 - Town
 - Camping, boating, fishing
Read *Country Living*; *Working Mother*, *Redbook*, *Modern Bride*
- Kids & Cul-de-Sacs
 - Upscale, suburban, married with children in recently built subdivisions; younger than Beltway Boomers
 - Median household income: \$68,785
 - High Asian, Hispanic

- Suburban
- Read parenting magazines; *Family Fun*, *Working Mother*, *Parenting*, *Home*, and *This Old House*
- Big Fish, Small Pond
 - Older, upper-class, college-educated professionals, among leading citizens of their small-town communities; upscale empty-nesters
 - Median income: \$77,666
 - Town
 - Country clubs, large investment portfolios, and computer technology
 - Read *Southern Living*, *Golf Digest*, *Golf Magazine*, *Travel & Leisure*
- Country Casuals
 - Middle-aged, upper-middle-class households that have started to empty nest; Own small businesses
 - Median income \$66,401
 - Town, rural
 - Travel, own timeshares, eat out
 - Read hunting and fishing magazines; *Country Living*, *Southern Living*, *Field and Stream*; *Delta's Sky*

Of course, there are other high potential market segments that may or may not exist within these clusters of travelers most likely to visit the Heritage Area. These include nature based tourists, heritage and cultural tourists, African American tourists, and couples with dual income and no kids. It is important to develop a two-tier marketing approach directed at regional and local high potential market clusters.

Tables 6 and 7 look at the potential economic impact of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area visitation. The impacts were analyzed according to local, non-local, hotel, and other lodging visiting sectors. Table 6 displays the potential distribution of attendance throughout those sectors comprising local tourism economies. The distribution of visitors was based on the visitation to seven des-

ignated National Heritage Areas profiled by Stynes and Yen Sun (2004). Table 7 details the potential impact of total visitor spending within the visiting sectors. The total spending includes retail, lodging, and other spending such as food and beverage. One must keep in mind that leakage of total impact flow out of the local economy can be as much as 50 percent, although the total spending may continue to attract companies and businesses to the area stimulating further economic growth.

Table 6: Potential Tourism Visitation

Per Year	Local Day	Non-Local Day	Hotel	Other Lodging	Total	Total Non-Local
5,000	1,100	1,500	1,700	700	5,000	3,900
10,000	2,200	3,000	3,400	1,400	10,000	7,800
15,000	3,300	4,500	4,500	2,100	15,000	11,700
20,000	4,400	6,000	6,000	2,800	20,000	15,600
25,000	5,500	7,500	7,500	3,500	25,000	19,500

Table 7: Potential Tourism Visitation/ Total Spending

Per Year	Local Day	Non-Local Day	Hotel	Other Lodging	Total	Total Non-Local
5,000	\$61,468	\$127,545	\$889,066	\$163,499	\$1,241,578	\$1,180,110
10,000	\$122,936	\$255,090	\$1,778,132	\$326,998	\$2,483,156	\$2,360,220
15,000	\$184,404	\$382,635	\$2,667,198	\$490,497	\$3,724,734	\$3,540,330
20,000	\$245,872	\$510,180	\$3,556,264	\$653,996	\$4,966,312	\$4,720,440
25,000	\$307,340	\$637,725	\$4,445,330	\$817,495	\$6,207,890	\$5,900,550

The following are recommendations for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area to help establish, guide, and promote tourism development.

- Improve signage and interpretation
- Emphasize small-town atmosphere
- Develop regional tourism linkages; golf, camping, hunting, fishing amenities
- Develop tour itinerary
- Simplify narrative
- Implement modest tourism programs; be cautious about facility investments
- Market to families (women and children) and growing multi-cultural interests
- Develop materials for distribution by DeKalb and Atlanta CVB
- Feature Stonecrest Mall Retail Area prominently in marketing materials

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

The Environmental Consequences section evaluates and compares the impact of the conceptual alternatives. Since the alternatives presented in this plan are conceptual, the potential environmental consequences or impacts are discussed in broad terms. The direct and indirect impacts are organized below first by impact topic and secondly by alternatives. Cumulative impacts are also discussed for each impact topic.

The methodology used evaluates the intensity, context, duration, and timing of the impacts. The following terms will be used in comparing the environmental impacts among alternatives:

- *Negligible* – The impact is barely perceptible or not measurable
- *Minor* – The impact is slightly detectable

and measurable but is either localized or would not adversely affect resources.

- *Moderate* – The impact is clearly detectable and could have appreciable effect on resources.
- *Major* – The impact is substantial and highly noticeable or measurable.
- *Short-term* – The impact lasts less than one year.
- *Long-term* – The impact lasts one year or longer.

The impact analysis will also state if the resulting impacts are *adverse* or *beneficial* to the environmental resources. Table 3 provides a Summary of the Direct and Indirect Impacts for the Alternatives. Section 1.8 Scoping and Issues provides additional information on the impact topics and associated issues and the impact measurement methodology.

Cumulative Impacts

The AMHA planning effort is not occurring in a vacuum in the Atlanta Area. Rather, other planning initiatives and projects are underway, or in the planning stages, and will have cumulative effects on the Heritage Area.

These initiatives include:

- **Atlanta Regional Commission Regional Development and Transportation Plan:** The ARC is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency that encompasses the three counties within the Heritage Area. To guide and coordinate regional decisions, the ARC completes two long-range plans. The first, the Regional Development Plan consists of a Technical Staff Report with inventory and analysis and a Regional Agenda, which incorporates research and public input for identifying future needs, goals, objectives, and implementation strategies. The regional plan combines and interrelates local planning efforts to establish regional policies for issues such as sustainable growth, transportation, water supply and quality, and human services. The second, the Regional Transportation Plan consists of a balanced mix

of transportation projects. The ARC also completes or initiates many other studies and programs for the region, including the annual Transportation Improvement Program and the Livable Centers Initiative.

- **Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE) Initiatives:** In late 2004, the Heritage Area witnessed the ground breaking for the new facilities for AWARE. AWARE is a non-profit animal rescue and rehabilitation center that is "committed to the preservation and restoration of wildlife and its habitat through education and wildlife rehabilitation". They focus not only on the immediate help to animals, but on educating people so that the positive affect on wildlife and habitat can be long lasting into the future.
- **City of Lithonia's Livable Centers Initiative and Smart Growth Design Protocol:** In 2003, the City of Lithonia received the Livable Centers Initiative planning grant from ARC to assist in revitalization, economic growth, and enhancement of community character. The LCI plan consisted of a background, a development plan, and an action plan. The Smart Growth Design Protocol prepared by the Smart Growth Leadership Institute and University of Southern California spurred from the LCI and includes recommendations for design review and approval protocol and design guidelines and standards.
- **County wide effort to create South River Greenway:** The AMHA Alliance has been working closely with the Path Foundation, the Counties, the State, and private land owners in an effort to create a greenway corridor along the South River. Many properties have been acquired in an attempt to connect existing greenspace.
- **DeKalb County Board of Education Arabia Mountain Environmental School Project:** In August 2002, a Steering Committee was composed to develop the beliefs, vision, mission, and strategies for a neighborhood school in the Arabia Mountain area. The following is the School's vision: "We visualize the Arabia Mountain Environmental Campus as

an energy-smart, sustainable, living laboratory that inspires staff, students, and the community to learn and live with a heightened sense of environmental awareness. The school will provide an interdisciplinary, environmentally focused curriculum utilizing the richness of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area to empower the students and community to become stewards of the environment. The curriculum will foster academic achievement, relevant hands-on research, and experimental learning. This campus will build bridges between indoor and outdoor environments, multiple generations, diverse cultures, varying abilities, and the school and community." The high school is targeted for 2006-07 and will acquire LEED certification. The middle school will follow and the Murphey Candler Elementary School already exists.

- **Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Plans:** GDOT has been working on widening I-20 and creating a new exit for Evan's Mill Road into the AMHA. This work and other transportation projects spur mitigation. Therefore, GDOT has been working on mitigation projects along the South River. This presents an opportunity to create more greenspace and to provide connections along the proposed South River Corridor.
- **Georgia State University History Department Studies & Initiatives:** Graduate students from the Heritage Preservation Program, as well as students from Historical American Landscapes and Case Studies in Historic Preservation classes have played an integral role in the nomination of the Klondike Historic District and are currently working on the nomination of three historic districts within Lithonia. They have provided studies and videos on the history of Lithonia.
- **Monastery of the Holy Spirit Master Plan:** The Monastery of the Holy Spirit has a rich history in the Heritage Area and offers spiritual retreats, monastic vocation, and daily prayers open to the public. Stain glass design and production also occurs at the Monastery. As stewards of the land for over 60 years, Native

American artifacts have been discovered while plowing the landscape, dating as far back as 10,000 B.C. Further due to preservation of the wetlands and riparian habitats on the Monastery property, the Monks have documented 88 varieties of butterflies, 48 species of dragonflies, and over 10 species of damsel flies. The Monastery has developed a Master Plan that will showcase the natural environment, religious history, and spirituality of the land. The plan utilizes a nature center, trail system, and outdoor exhibits to educate visitors. The granite Susong Home will be renovated to serve as a nature center and trailhead. The Monastery is in the process of acquiring the 260 acre Susong Homestead. The Monastery of the Holy Spirit, lying on the largest protected greenspace in Rockdale County, would then total over 2,200 acres.

- **New Birth Baptist Church Development:** The Church Development lies on 250 acres in DeKalb County off of Evans Mill Road. The 25,000 plus member church complex includes the Cathedral, Administrative Offices, Faith Academy, New Birth's Christian School of Excellence, and various other programs and activities. The Cathedral accommodates 10,000 people and a library, bookstore, computer lab, kitchen, audio and video studios, a nursery, and more. The New Birth Baptist Church Development is continuing to expand to offer more services to its members and the extended community.
- **Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Master Plan:** Established in 1969, the park includes a designated National Landmark, the 100-acre monadnock, Panola Mountain. The mountain's ecology is largely intact, including fragile lichens and mosses. To further protect this sensitive environment, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources expanded the park to include a former golf course and farm estate. The Panola Mountain Park Expansion will host an array of day-use activities and the Georgia State Park Education & Demonstration Facility. The Park will provide an opportunity for overnight camping,

extensive hiking trails, and to observe stream and native plant restoration. By providing a separate location for higher use activities, the GA DNR will be able to further protect Panola Mountain through restricted access and only guided tours. They are also working to create the Power of Flight Bird Habitat adjacent to the South River.

- **Path Foundation Master Plan:** The Path Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing trails, has created a Master Plan for existing, planned, and future multi-use trails in the Atlanta Region. Many of these trails, such as the Arabia Mountain Trail and Rockdale River Trail, go through or link to the AMHA.
- **Quarry Industry Activities and Initiatives:** Quarrying has played an integral role in the history and culture of the AMHA. Lithonia Granite has been used in many important structures in the nation. Three quarries are still in operation today and continue to aid the local economy. These include the Big Ledge, Pine Mountain, and Rock Chapel, which have the potential to provide strong partnerships in implementing the goals of the Heritage Area. Major quarry industries in the Heritage Area have been coordinating on new projects, including the potential erection of a granite museum.
- **Rockdale County Stonecrest Area Study:** With increased development pressure and the influence of the Stonecrest Mall development, this study was created to assist the local community in meeting their vision for an economically viable, safe, and sustainable place for people. The plan provides recommendations for land use, transportation, and urban design and represents intra-jurisdictional cooperation between Rockdale and DeKalb County.
- **South River Watershed Alliance Efforts and Initiatives:** The mission of the South River Watershed Alliance is "to protect and restore the water quality and biodiversity of this watershed to the beneficial use of humans and wildlife". The newly formed Alliance merges various citizen groups along the 544 square mile

drainage basin of the South River into one group for water quality and flooding issues. Their goals include educating, networking, monitoring, ensuring the implementation of water protection, and promoting management planning for the South River Watershed.

- **Stonecrest Mall Development:** The Stonecrest Mall is a Development of Regional Impact, meaning the impact of the development will extend beyond one jurisdiction. The Mall, along with rapidly growing development around, is an economic generator and offers shopping to residents and visitors in the eastern Atlanta Metropolitan Area.

4.1 NATURAL RESOURCES

Alternative 2, 3, 4, and 5 may cause *negligible, short-term adverse impacts* due to construction of trails and interpretive gateways and venues and high visitation; however, the *minor to major, long-term beneficial impacts* of these alternatives to the natural resources far outweighs the *minor to major, long-term adverse impacts* of the No Action, Alternative 1.

4.1.1 Topographic and Geological Features

Alternative 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would continue local policies. Arabia Mountain Heritage Area and Panola Mountain State Conservation Park protect the larger monadnocks and rock outcroppings; however, the protected land and other non-protected geological formations in the Heritage Area could feel the pressure of continued development and experience *minor, long-term adverse impacts*.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network's themed interpretive trails could not only increase public awareness of the sensitive ecosystem produced by the Heritage Areas geologic formations, but could help direct and control the footprint of visitors. This would result in a *minor, long-term beneficial impact* to key topographic and

geologic features.

Alternative 3: Area

The Area alternative would help to create buffers to existing protected formations, preserve the ecosystem of the geological formations, and provide additional open space to disperse visitors and provide for more active recreation opportunities away from sensitive formations. This alternative allows visitors to experience the natural state of rock formation, the human use through quarrying, and the recovery of the ecosystem created by granite formations resulting in a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 4: Cluster

The Cluster alternative contains gateways at the two major geological formations of Arabia and Panola Mountain. These gateways can assist in educating the public on granite formations, while the Lithonia gateway can tell the story of the economic significance of the granite. A *minor, long-term beneficial impact* would result by increasing visitor knowledge and awareness.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The themed routes and interpretive gateways of the Hybrid alternative can increase public awareness, direct and control visitor access, and by having gateways apart from the protected granite formations can relieve the pressures of increased visitation. The Hybrid alternative would have a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* to the topographic and geological features.

Conclusions

Even though the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve and the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park protect the two major granite formations, there is a need to buffer these areas and to provide public awareness and protection for these and additional topographic and geological features. Alternatives 2 and 4 provide *minor benefits*, while Alternative 3 and especially the combined attributes of Alternative 5 would provide the *most benefit*.

Cumulative Impacts

Two of the largest monadnocks in the Heritage Area, Arabia Mountain and Panola Mountain, would continue to be protected by DeKalb County and Georgia DNR. Georgia DNR has been working to further protect Panola Mountain with its recent expansion and Master Plan that will relocate day-use activities away from the mountain allowing for restricted access and only guided tours. The implementation of any one of the alternatives, except Alternative 1, would facilitate continued preservation and conservation of geological resources resulting in an improved appreciation of the Heritage Area's unique flora, fauna, and ecosystems. The encroachment of development may deter protection; however, with the effort to support sustainable development and smart growth, a *long-term beneficial impact* would result.

4.1.2 Hydrologic Systems/Riparian Corridors and Water Quality

Alternative 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would continue local policies and if urbanization and development continues to increase, *moderate, short and long-term adverse impacts* could result. Increased development without mitigation would increase the main water pollutants to the Heritage Area of urban runoff, combined sewer overflow, and erosion and sediment control.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative would cause a *minor, long-term beneficial impact* through interpretive trails that would increase public awareness by taking visitors to and through riparian corridors. Visitors would have the opportunity to observe first hand the impacts of pollution on hydrologic systems.

Alternative 3: Area

The South River corridor is emphasized in the Area alternative as the Early Settlement Corridor. Therefore, visitors would become aware of the historical and archeological as well as environmental significance of the waterways through interpretation and experiences. Enhancement and preservation of

riparian corridors could include stream restoration and increased buffering from development, thus providing a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 4: Cluster

The Cluster alternative would result in a *minor, long-term beneficial impact* by enhancing the stream corridors within the clusters and by providing interpretation in the Natural Systems Cluster. The Natural Systems Cluster would house a stream and wetland restoration area, allowing visitors to visualize and learn.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative utilizes the interpretive routes of the Network alternative to connect visitors to and through riparian corridors from the Yellow River down to the South River. The South River is emphasized as a riparian and early settlement corridor, which would assist in restoration, preservation, and buffering from development. The result would be a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* through visitor education, observations, and awareness.

Conclusions

The protection, enhancement, and buffering of riparian corridors is important to water quality and riparian habitats. No Action could result in *adverse impacts* to hydrology, while Alternatives 2 and 4 and especially 3 and 5 could result in many *long-term benefits* by enhancing riparian systems and visitor knowledge and awareness.

Cumulative Impacts

The Georgia DOT has been working on mitigation projects along the South River Corridor, which is creating more protected land. This combined with the efforts of the newly formed South River Watershed Alliance, the county-wide effort to create the South River Greenway, and mostly either alternative 3 or 5 would promote increased preservation of waterways and riparian corridors, due to awareness of the Atlanta Metropolitan Area's water crisis. By increasing public knowledge and awareness of water issues and the need for best management practices and erosion and sediment

control, the combined effort would result in *long-term beneficial impacts*. Although, continued residential and commercial development would continue to cause *short-term adverse impacts* on the Heritage Area's waterways, due to erosion and pollution. The implementation of alternative 2 or 4 would result in less benefits and alternative 1 would have no added benefit.

4.1.3 Vegetation and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species

Alternative 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would continue local policies and development and infrastructure could continue to expand, clearing vegetation groups. Habitat and ecosystem relocation and removal and increase in exotic species that inhibit native species may result. This could lead to *moderate, long-term adverse impacts*.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative does not protect groups of vegetation, but it does provide an interpretive network of trails to educate visitors and to keep foot traffic in a defined corridor. The routes take visitors through a variety of plant types and communities and would assist in creating *minor, long-term beneficial impacts* to vegetation.

Alternative 3: Area

The Area alternative preserves, protects, and enhances granite outcrops, fields, forest, wetlands, and riparian corridors, which are all key to plant species survival. It identifies and defines the cultural landscapes of the Heritage Area to teach visitors about the historical and ecological importance and sensitivity of the Heritage Area. This would result in a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 4: Cluster

Although preservation would only occur in key cluster locations, a variety of land cover, unique ecosystems, and riparian segments would benefit. The focus of one cluster is on the Natural Systems of the Heritage Area and can assist in increasing

public awareness and knowledge through interpretation and observation. This would lead to a *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative utilizes themed trails to control visitor footpaths, key gateways to educate visitors and to relieve pressure from high visitation on more sensitive environments, and enhances the South River corridor along with other key vegetative groups and ecosystems within the other interpretive focus areas. The result would be *moderate, long-term beneficial impacts*.

Conclusions

No Action could produce *adverse affects* and cause degradation of unique vegetative communities and rare plant species. Alternative 2 and 4 and primarily 3 and 5 would provide many *beneficial impacts* to vegetation through identification, interpretation, education, and observation.

Cumulative Impacts

The continued education at the Heritage Area's existing interpretive facilities, the new Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort facility, and the Future DeKalb County Environmental School combined with the influence of either alternatives 2, 3, or 5 on habitat corridor enhancement and landscape preservation would result in an improved appreciation of the Heritage Area's unique vegetation and wildlife habitats. Alternative 4 would have less of an impact since it highlights existing facilities and doesn't ensure habitat connectivity between facilities. Through the implementation of the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Master Plan, visitors would have the opportunity to observe the restoration of a golf course back to native plant material and stream corridor. The result of visitor education and observations would provide *long-term beneficial impacts*. Continued residential and commercial development would potentially cause *short to long-term adverse impacts* to vegetative groups and rare and endangered species populations.

4.1.4 Fauna and Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species

Alternative 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would continue local policies. Increased urbanization and development could not only destroy wildlife habitats and corridors, but could inhibit water resources with increase water pollution from urban runoff, combined sewer overflow, and sediment and erosion control. This could have *moderate, short and long-term impacts* to birds, fish, and wildlife.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative can educate and control visitors through themed interpretive trails; however, it does not directly preserve wildlife habitats and corridors. This would result in a *negligible, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 3: Area

Wildlife habitats and corridors can be maintained, revitalized, and protected through the landscapes within the Area alternative. The sensitivity of riparian and granite outcrop habitats are emphasized, while additional land would create protective buffers and could provide more habitat resources for wildlife. A *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* would result.

Alternative 4: Cluster

This alternative would protect key wildlife habitats within the clusters, but it would rely on existing and proposed greenspace to create connecting wildlife corridors. The gateways could assist in public awareness through interpretation, education, and hands on demonstrations. Thus the result would be a *negligible, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative would revitalize and protect key wildlife habitats and corridors. The gateways would relieve the pressure of high visitation on more sensitive wildlife resources. The interpretive venues and trails would educate visitors, while controlling their impact to the surrounding environment. *Moderate, long-term beneficial impacts*

would result.

Conclusions

The preservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats and corridors is key to the survival of birds, fish, and wildlife. Alternative 2 and 4 would provide *negligible benefits*, while Alternative 3 and 5 would result in the *most beneficial impacts* to wildlife habitats and corridors.

Cumulative Impacts

The Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort provides many educational opportunities on the preservation and restoration of wildlife, while the Future DeKalb County Environmental School would utilize the AMHA as a living laboratory to teach students and the community. The Panola Mountain State Conservation Park is planning for the creation of the Power of Flight Bird Habitat for the preservation of migratory birds. Bird watching tours already occur at Arabia and Panola Mountain. These initiatives would be enhanced by the implementation of any one of the alternatives, except alternative 1, resulting in *long-term beneficial impacts*. Continued residential and commercial development would potentially cause *short to long-term adverse impacts* by displacing wildlife through the removal of their habitats.

4.1.5 Air Quality

Alternative 1: No Action

The No action alternative would continue local policies. Therefore, continued development and growth, coupled with a lack of initiative to provide alternative means of travel, could cause a *minor, long-term adverse impact* on the air quality within the Heritage Area. With the No Action alternative, the automobile is the sole means of transportation in the Heritage Area.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative focuses on the expansion of the existing multi-use trail system to experience the Heritage Area. This would result in *minor, long-term beneficial impact* on air quality by providing an alternate means of transportation via the multi-use

trail system and potential trolley and shuttle services along key driving routes.

Alternative 3: Area

The Area alternative works in conjunction with the existing and future multi-use trail system, and would have a *negligible, long-term beneficial impact* on air quality. This alternative does not focus on the trail system, but does utilize it to connect between cultural landscapes. It also aids in preserving and buffering key environmental resources that assist with filtering pollutants.

Alternative 4: Cluster

Cluster alternative centralizes visitors at one location to provide education and interpretation. Use of trails would be encouraged to connect clusters. This alternative would have a *negligible, long-term beneficial impact* by encouraging the use of alternative means of transportation and by clustering uses so less driving is required.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative focuses on trail linkages and the use of alternative transportation within the Heritage Area, via shuttle service and trolleys. The encouragement of alternative means of travel, other than the single-occupancy automobile, will result in *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would result in some means of *beneficial impacts* to air quality by providing or encouraging the use of alternative transportation and promoting sustainable planning. No Action could cause *adverse impacts*.

Cumulative Impacts

According to the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) factors that will help to improve air quality will be increased use of alternate transportation, planning that links transportation with land uses, and increasing efficiency of existing transportation and land use infrastructure. The Plans by the Atlanta Regional Commission, Georgia DOT, the City of Lithonia, and the Counties present strategies for land use, infrastructure, and

transportation that would assist in improving air quality. Although, these plans do not control or guide all development, and increased development would result in *adverse impacts* due to increased pollution from traffic and structures. The Path Foundation has completed miles of multi-use trails in the AMHA and their Master Plan provides for more. This provides an alternate form of transportation for both residents and visitors. Traffic congestion and air pollution in the area would be lessened by the continued construction of the multi-use greenway trail system in the Heritage Area. The combined efforts of these on-going plans with either alternatives 2 or 5 would result in *long-term beneficial impacts*. The implementation of either alternative 3 or 4 would result in lesser beneficial impacts.

4.2 CULTURAL RESOURCES

All of the cultural, archeological, and historical resources of the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area are non-renewable. Planning efforts need to be made now to ensure the preservation and protection of these sites and structures. Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would all result in some means of *long-term beneficial impacts* to the cultural resources, while the No Action could lead to *major, long-term adverse impacts*.

4.2.1 Archeological Resources

Alternative 1: No Action

The No Action alternative would continue local practices. There is a high likelihood that the total number of archeological sites is many times that known today. The lack of programming and push to conduct more intensive archeological surveys and to provide protection for known sites combined with increased development could lead to *major, long-term adverse impacts* to this non-renewable resource.

Alternative 2: Network

The themed route system of the Network alternative would provide interpretation and educational opportunities on known archeological sites and the potential locations of others. This alternative would result in *minor, long-term beneficial*

impacts.

Alternative 3: Area

By emphasizing the preservation and conservation of cultural landscapes, especially the South River Early Settlement Landscape, the Area alternative would protect many known archeological sites and high potential areas for additional sites. This combined with the interpretation opportunities would result in *moderate, long-term beneficial impacts*.

Alternative 4: Cluster

Through the use of interpretive sites and gateways, this alternative can create awareness and provide educational opportunities on past generations and their archeological remains and artifacts. *Minor, long-term beneficial impacts* would result.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

This alternative would have a *major, long-term beneficial impact* by providing a layering approach of components to educate and promote preservation of key archeological resources. The focus areas highlight landscapes and corridors with high potential for archeological sites, while the themed route system and gateways provide interpretation and appreciation of key resources.

Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 would result in *minor to moderate benefits*, while alternative 5 would result in significant and *major benefits*. The No Action alternative could result in the destruction of non-renewable archeological resources and thus cause many *adverse impacts*.

Cumulative Impacts

Since very little intensive archaeological surveys have been conducted in the Heritage Area and it contains a major river and various third and fourth rank streams, there is a high likelihood that the total number of sites is many times that known today. To avoid unintentionally impacting these non-renewable resources and to provide information with which to study the every day life of the people who have lived here, the undiscovered sites need to be found and managed within a well thought out

framework. Local jurisdictions need to ensure that archaeological resources are documented appropriately and preserved on development plans. Development can destroy and permanently displace archaeological resources resulting in *long-term adverse impacts*. Plans occurring in the area do increase the amount of preserved land, especially on riparian corridors, which will aid in the protection of archaeological features. Even more so, the implementation of either alternative 2 or 4 or especially 3 or 5 combined with other area plans would result in *long-term beneficial impacts* due to education and preservation.

4.2.2 Cultural and Historical Resources

Alternative 1: No Action.

The No action alternative would continue local practices, and would not implement any additional programs to conserve and protect the Heritage Area's resources. This lack of programming could lead to a loss of existing resources. This alternative would cause a *major, long-term adverse impact* on cultural and historic resources in the Heritage Area.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative would emphasize preservation through programs that would highlight the Heritage Area's cultural sites and historic structures for educational and interpretive uses. The driving and trail system would provide interpretive links to key cultural and historic venues. This alternative would cause a *minor, long-term beneficial impact* on preservation in the Heritage Area.

Alternative 3: Area

The Area alternative would place emphasis on conserving key historic and cultural landscapes through programs, interpretive opportunities, and identification. By highlighting selected environments in this alternative, visitors would be able to experience the relationship between people and the land and the importance of preserving the stories they tell. This alternative would cause a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* on historic preservation in the Heritage Area.

Alternative 4: Cluster

By promoting existing historic and culturally significant sites as gateways, the Cluster alternative protects and restores the historic character of the Heritage Area. Encouraging the revitalization of downtown Lithonia and development of a interpretive center along the South River are similar programs that will preserve the Heritage Area's cultural resources. This alternative would cause a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* on preservation in the Heritage Area.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

By combining the effort of landscape preservation with the conservation efforts of revitalizing historically significant buildings and sites, the Hybrid alternative will have the most significant effect by promoting parallel programs for protection of the Heritage Area's resources. Utilizing former homesteads as visitor centers or interpretive facilities, coupled with visitors' hands-on experience in unique landscapes will have a *major, long-term beneficial impact*.

Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would have a *beneficial impact* on the historic and cultural resources, with Alternative 5 providing the most significant to the Heritage Area. The No Action alternative could *negatively impact* the Heritage Area in the *long-term*.

Cumulative Impacts

Through the effort of both public and private entities, five of the oldest historic homes in the Heritage Area have been protected. Examples include the Parker home on the Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Expansion and the Monastery of the Holy Spirit working to preserve the granite Susong home. Coordination between the AMHA Alliance and DeKalb County facilitated moving the historic Ragsdale home to protected park land so that it would not be destroyed by development. The Georgia State University History Department has played an active role in identifying historic structures and promoted the nomination of the Klondike and Proposed Lithonia Historic Districts. These efforts combined with any one of

the alternatives, except alternative 1, would promote the continued conservation of the Heritage Area's historic resources particularly granite, resulting in an appreciation of the Heritage Area's cultural heritage and a *long-term beneficial impact* on the Heritage Area's historic resources.

4.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

Alternative 2, 3, 4, and 5 may cause *negligible, short-term adverse impacts* due to construction of trails and interpretive gateways and venues and high visitation; however, the *long-term beneficial impacts* of these alternatives to the socio-economic resources far outweighs the *long-term adverse impacts* of the No Action, Alternative 1.

4.3.1 Recreation/Open Space Resources

Alternative 1: No Action

The No action alternative would continue local practices, and would not expand the recreational resources of the Heritage Area. Recreational amenities in the Heritage Area may expand by outside interests, yet would neither be encouraged or discouraged by this alternative. This alternative would cause a *negligible, long-term adverse impact* on promoting tourism in the Heritage Area.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative would greatly expand the existing multi-use trail system in the Heritage Area. As planned, the multi-use network would encompass many miles of greenway trails, including rest facilities, interpretation and visitor information. This alternative would cause a *moderate, long-term beneficial impact* on encouraging recreation in the Heritage Area.

Alternative 3: Area

The Area alternative utilizes multi-use trails for connectivity, and therefore, promotes the expansion of the system. The sensitivity of riparian and granite outcrop habitats would be preserved, while additional land would create protective buffers and could accommodate more active recreation uses. This alternative would have *minor, long-term beneficial*

impact on recreation resources.

Alternative 4: Cluster

The Cluster alternative emphasizes activities within gateway locations, promoting educational and hands-on activities, as well as linkages to other gateways via multi-use trails. Each gateway allows the visitor to experience the resources of the Heritage Area through hiking, interpretive signage, wayside exhibits and hands-on activities, such as a children's quarrying exhibit. This alternative would have *negligible, long-term beneficial impact* on recreation resources.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative expands the Heritage Area's recreational resources by promoting the expansion of the existing multi-use trail network, through connectivity of greenspace, the promotion of river and wildlife activities (canoeing, kayaking, bird-watching, hiking, etc). This alternative would enhance and promote the recreational resources of the Heritage Area, and encourages programs that engage the visitor to 'experience' the Heritage Area. Thus, this alternative would have a *major, long-term beneficial impact*.

Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would have a *beneficial impact* on the recreation resources, with Alternative 5 providing the most significant to the Heritage Area. The No Action alternative could *negatively impact* the Heritage Area in the *long-term*.

Cumulative Impacts

The AMHA Alliance has been coordinating with the Counties, State, and private entities on creating greenway corridors and linkages, especially around Arabia Mountain and along the South River. This combined with on going GDOT mitigation has resulted in thousands of additional greenspace acres within the AMHA. The Panola Mountain State Conservation Park Expansion will be providing additional day-use activities, camping, and hiking trails. In addition, the Path Foundation completed and planned multi-use trails provide key greenspace connections. Recreation development may increase, due to the popularity of the existing multi-use trail,

additional greenspace acreage, and the demand by future residents. The implementation of any one of the alternatives, except alternative 1 would enhance the effort of the other groups/plans. This would result in *long-term beneficial impacts* to recreational resources in the AMHA.

4.3.2 Regional Growth and Land Use Pressures

The Alliance promotes sustainability and seeks to set a national standard for “Smart Growth” in its approach to the development, conservation and preservation of Arabia Mountain and its surrounding lands. As stated in their mission, they work to ensure that recreational, natural, and historical resources of Arabia Mountain and its environs are protected, connected by greenway corridors and well managed to provide citizens and future generations the opportunity to enjoy this magnificent feature of Georgia’s heritage. The Alliance has succeeded in gathering environmentalists, developers, politicians, and community members into a uniquely cooperative organization, dedicated to preserving several thousand acres of land in the heart of Atlanta’s next big expansion area, while promoting the harmonious development of that area into thriving communities.

The Preferred Plan/Alternative for the AMHA would not determine land use and zoning, but it should be a sustainable plan. In order to provide *long-term beneficial impacts*, the alternatives should strive to incorporate sustainable planning principles and promote sustainable development and smart growth. As defined by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, “Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainable planning provides a balance between the limited renewable and non-renewable resources and community needs. The Smart Communities Network writes “sustainable development provides a framework under which communities can use resources efficiently, create efficient infrastructures, protect and enhance quality of life, and create new

businesses to strengthen their economies.”

Alternative 1: No Action

The No action alternative would continue local policies. Therefore, continued development and growth, coupled with a lack of sustainable planning initiatives to protect the Heritage Area’s resources and provide alternative means of travel, could cause a *negligible, long-term adverse impact* on the regional growth pressures within the Heritage Area.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network concept engages the visitor via a multi-use trail system. This alternative would enhance driving corridors through beautification programs and interpretive signage and create trail corridors that would serve to educate, connect, and provide alternate transportation. These efforts would aid in slowing growth and promoting sustainable development resulting in *minor, long-term beneficial impacts*.

Alternative 3: Area

The Area concept expands visitor facilities and calls for the reuse of existing structures. It also buffers and preserves key cultural landscapes for future generations and utilizes the multi-use trail system to connect these landscapes and provide alternative transportation. This would result in *minor, long-term beneficial impacts* by slowing growth and promoting sustainability.

Alternative 4: Cluster

The Cluster concept expands visitor facilities and calls for the reuse of existing structures. By clustering key interpretive venues and connecting them with the multi-use trail system and potentially a shuttle, this alternative reduces the need for visitors to drive and promotes sustainability. This alternative would result in *minor, long-term beneficial impacts*.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid concept expands visitor facilities, renovates existing structures and promotes alternative transportation to experience the Heritage Area. This alternative would expand greenway

corridors for the trail system and for habitat protection and enhancement. Beautification programs would be promoted to enhance the driving tour. These combined efforts would result in slowing growth and promoting sustainability to create *moderate, long-term beneficial impacts*.

Conclusions

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would provide *long-term beneficial impacts* by enhancing and promoting sustainable practices in the Heritage Area. The No Action alternative could *negatively impact* the Heritage Area in the *long-term*.

Cumulative Impacts

In many ways, the interest in open space preservation and protection of the area around Arabia Mountain has been prompted by recognition that there is a narrow window of opportunity to retain open lands, to encourage "Smart Growth" and sustainable environmental planning, and to protect important resources before land costs and the economics of development make such initiatives impossible. The Heritage Area is in the path of rapid development, located at the nexus between the denser urban core of the region and counties with relatively more open land. The influx of residents requiring additional services, the existing catalyst of the Mall of Stonecrest, and the proximity to downtown Atlanta will create increased demand for commercial and residential development. If new development does not utilize environmentally sustainable planning methods, then *long-term adverse impacts* would result. Any one of the alternatives, except alternative 1, combined with the many on going plans in the area, such as the City of Lithonia Livable Centers Initiative and the Rockdale County Stonecrest Area Study are planning ahead for changes in the area and promote sustainable planning practices to provide *long-term benefits* to future generations. Traffic congestion and air quality in the Heritage Area will be lessened by the continued construction of the Path Foundation multi-use greenway trail system.

4.3.3 Tourism

Alternative 1: No Action

The No action alternative would continue local policies, and would not include a marketing or tourism program. Visitation to the Heritage Area would neither increase nor decrease using this alternative. This would cause a *minor, long-term adverse impact* on promoting tourism in the Heritage Area.

Alternative 2: Network

The Network alternative utilizes interpretation along the multi-use trail and a driving tour audiotape or CD to engage the visitor. Beautification programs would be promoted along the trail and driving tour to prevent or buffer eyesores. This alternative would enhance visitation and would have a *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 3: Area

Through the Area concept, the visitor experiences entire landscapes to learn about the diversity of the Heritage Area. This alternative includes interpretation and facilities and would have a *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 4: Cluster

Through the Cluster concept, the gateways provide visitors with visual and hands-on education opportunities at key locations throughout the Heritage Area. This alternative would include four visitor centers and interpretation facilities, and would have a *minor, long-term beneficial impact*.

Alternative 5: Hybrid (Preferred)

The Hybrid alternative expands the visitor facilities to include one centrally located education and learning center, with linkages to other facilities and hands-on education opportunities. This alternative would greatly expand visitor facilities, provide a large central facility and promote economic development and revitalization throughout the Heritage Area. Beautification programs to enhance the driving and trail network would be promoted to alleviate eyesores. Thus, this alternative would have

a major, long-term beneficial impact.

Conclusions

The No Action alternative would have an *adverse impact* on tourism, while Alternatives 2, 3, 4, and 5 would *benefit* the Heritage Area's tourism.

Cumulative Impacts

Any one of the alternatives, except alternative 1, combined with the Atlanta Metropolitan Area as a well-known destination for conferences and sports tourism, the shopping opportunities at the Mall of Stonecrest, and the nearby historic Conyers would provide *long-term beneficial impacts* to tourism by diversifying the region's current product to attract other promising market niches. The AMHA has a great potential to attract visitors interested in nature, culture, and heritage. AMHA tourism can play a dual role in stimulating economic development while preserving quality of life and sense of place. Heritage Area tourism developers need to remain vigilant to developments that threaten or degrade the physical appearance of the landscape, and act to prevent or buffer them when possible. If not, *adverse impacts* to tourism would result.

4.4 MITIGATION

Recommended projects, programs and structures (i.e. Visitor centers) may require mitigation. These projects would be thoroughly reviewed and scrutinized with current conditions, and the appropriate mitigation determined as based on public review and comment, and the Plan's goals and policies. Jurisdictional requirements must also be met.

Some potential activities for the AMHA that would require mitigation:

- Traffic and roadway improvements
- Infrastructure Development
- Rehabilitation or Redevelopment of Existing Structures/Sites
- Construction Activities requiring land disturbance
- Development affecting Wetland and

Riparian Corridors

- Development affecting Cultural, Historical, and Archeological Resources

5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

The Environmental Assessment was prepared for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance by Ecos Environmental Design, Inc. The following is the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Consultant Team.

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6.0 COORDINATION

6.1 Public Outreach Summary

An extensive outreach process guided by the project agenda and schedule established for the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan was conducted during the study. The outreach process utilized a variety of methods for engaging and informing the public including steering committee meetings, project database, direct mail and e-mail, public meetings, advertising, newsletters and a website. As a result of the many outreach techniques utilized, significant input has been received from the public.

6.1.1 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was initiated to represent the broad and varied interests of the Heritage Area. Twenty-one representatives from key stakeholder groups within the Heritage Area including DeKalb, Rockdale and Henry Counties, City of Lithonia, DNR, community associations, area businesses, schools and other interests comprised the committee. The group provided valuable insight into the climate and future goals of the Heritage Area and offered guidance on the plan elements, potential strategies and direction for the community meetings. During the study process, the committee met five times. However, committee members were also extensively involved in the promotion of the public meetings and participated in a variety of ways including sending e-mails and direct mail, putting out road signs announcing upcoming meetings, making telephone calls and other methods to generate and maintain public interest.

Steering Committee Meetings were held on the following dates:

- July 6, 2004
- August 18, 2004
- October 20, 2004 – Steering Committee Concept Charrette
- November 18, 2004
- January 12, 2005
- February 16, 2005
- March 16, 2005

6.1.2 Database Development

In order to insure broad public outreach, a database of individual stakeholders was developed including local, state and federal elected officials, key government officials, and the general public. Contacts used to develop the initial database were obtained from a variety of sources and included both mailing and e-mail addresses. A mailing list of close to 700 and an e-mail blast of close to 500 were ultimately developed with overlap between the two. The lists were used for notification of meetings and other newsworthy issues related to the Arabia Mountain area. The lists were maintained and updated as new persons/groups were identified and

others moved away. The lists were used for 7 direct mailings to include meeting announcements and newsletters, and fifteen e-mail blasts for purposes of meeting notification and other Arabia Mountain news of interest.

A database of media outlets (primarily newspaper) was also developed and used to notify the media about public meetings. The list included 8 area news publications. Additionally, representatives of the media attended public meetings to observe and hear first hand the presentation of findings from the study and feedback from the public. Several articles and announcements were also written to capture not only the public outreach process but also to inform the public of ongoing activities at Arabia Mountain.

6.1.3 Public Meetings

A total of 3 public meetings were conducted for the study and was the primary method used to engage the public. More than 250 people attended the three meetings. A written announcement was prepared for each meeting and mailed to the project database as well as distributed to area libraries. Additionally, 9 signs were placed at key street intersections in DeKalb and Rockdale Counties, and the City of Lithonia announcing the meetings. The first meeting held in September 2004 focused primarily on the Management Plan process and the Heritage Area boundaries and geographic area. The second meeting held in November 2004 provided details on the draft alternative concepts and interpretive themes. Also during this meeting a survey was conducted to assess the opinions and attitudes of the community about Arabia Mountain and the surrounding area. The final public meeting held in March 2005 presented the final concept (hybrid) and discussed the next steps for the project following the completion of the study. Agendas and other handout materials were also provided during each meeting.

For each meeting, the public was given the opportunity to provide feedback orally, on comment forms and at the various displays developed during the process. Additionally, a public e-mail address was established for the purpose of ongoing comments

that could be submitted at any time during the process. A total of twenty-three comments were received utilizing the public e-mail address. Individuals also used the e-mail address to update contact information.

Community Meetings were held on the following dates:

- September 8, 2004
- November 17, 2004
- March 1, 2005

6.1.4 Newsletters

A total of 4 newsletters have been prepared and distributed to date as another method of keeping the public informed about the study. For distribution, the newsletters were mailed, e-mailed and posted to the study web site. The first newsletter introduced the Management Plan study process, announced the first public meeting and provided information on how to stay informed. The second newsletter provided an overview of the first public meeting along with the feedback received from participants. The third newsletter highlighted the October 2004 steering committee charrette that identified draft goals and objectives for the Management Plan. Additionally, this newsletter announced the second public meeting date and continued to emphasize the use of the web site as a mechanism to stay informed and provide comments. The fourth newsletter summarized the November 2004 public meeting where the 3 draft concepts were presented.

The Newsletters and release dates are listed below:

- The Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan is officially underway! – September 1, 2004
- Community comes together to learn about the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Project – September 15, 2004
- Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan Steering Committee Charrette accomplishes draft goals and plan alternatives – November 4, 2004
- Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Management Plan moves into design phase – January 19, 2005

6.1.5 Web Site

The creation of the Management Plan web site located within the existing AMHA Alliance site was another important information tool for the public during the study process. The site was used as a repository for all information related to the study including the newsletters, meeting handouts and summaries, and all materials produced during the study process. A mechanism was also provided on the web site that allowed for ongoing public feedback.